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**A Bakhtinian Analysis of Computer-Mediated Communication: How  
L1 and L2 Students Co-Construct CMC Texts in a Graduate Course**

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L1 and L2 Students Co-Construct CMC Texts in a Graduate Course**

by

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**Dissertation**

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at Austin

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

**Doctor of Philosophy**

The University of Texas at Austin

December, 2003

To my parents

## **Acknowledgments**

This dissertation could not have been completed without the support of a number of people whom I would like to recognize and thank.

First and foremost, I want to express my heartfelt appreciation to the participants of the study. Despite their already busy schedules, they graciously spent many hours attending our interviews. The participants' willingness to share their experiences, their enthusiasm for the study, and their candid responses to my inquiry made this study a worthwhile endeavor. I always felt like my participants were co-authors of this work.

I want to thank the Chair of my dissertation committee, Diane Schallert, for the expert guidance, enthusiastic support, and "motherly" warmth she gave throughout the course of this work. Dr. Schallert's generous sharing of her time and her insights made possible my dialogic encounters with Michael Bakhtin and the data of the study. Thank you, Diane, for your warmth, openness, spirit, and excellence while mentoring me throughout this wonderful journey. Just a few words do not do justice to the gratitude and admiration I have for you.

I want to express my gratitude to Elaine Horwitz, Colleen Fairbanks, Keith Walters, and Ann Brooks, who as members of my dissertation committee provided thoughtful comments that enhanced the development of the study. Their expertise from different backgrounds has rounded my dissertation to a richer description. It was most helpful to enjoy their cooperative spirit in my orals.

I extend special thanks to my good friends and colleagues, Minseung Kim and Sunjoo Kim, who played many supporting roles throughout the different stages of this dissertation and my academic life at the University of Texas at Austin.

Finally, my deepest thanks must be reserved for my family. My husband, TaeYoung, has been a source of steady support and encouragement, and my daughter, Eunsue, has been a source of joy and happiness. My parents, Changki Na and Bokrae Cho, who have been tremendously supportive in enabling me to pursue my academic endeavors, have been an endless source of love and warmth. I dedicate this work to them.

# **A Bakhtinian Analysis of Computer-Mediated Communication: How L1 and L2 Students Co-Construct CMC Texts in a Graduate Course**

Publication No. \_\_\_\_\_

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The University of Texas at Austin, 2003

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This study reports the findings of a semester-long investigation into the discursive practices of advanced L1 and L2 students involved in the construction of CMC texts in a particular graduate course. A Bakhtinian framework of an utterance as dialogic, heteroglossic, and carnivalesque was used to explore the nature of CMC discourse in context. Data were collected in a graduate course on psycholinguistics in which students (11 international students and 12 American students) were expected to come to class prepared to discuss assigned readings. As part of the regular course activities, students participated in two asynchronous discussions held outside the class, and it is these two discussions that became the focal point of my investigation. Data were collected from multiple sources including classroom observations, printouts of CMC texts, students' self-reflective essays, and discourse-based interviews. Data were analyzed using a critical discourse analysis strategy (Fairclough, 1992) as well as more general qualitative, interpretive methods. Results indicated that a variety of factors related to the sociocultural context played a significant role in shaping online discourse. Among many, four factors emerged from the data as especially important: 1) the unique heteroglossic histories the students brought to the class; 2) the nature of the course; 3) the ways in

which CMC was managed by the teacher; and 4) the students' perceptions of CMC as a communication medium. With these contextual factors contributing to the participants' experience in CMC, much of what the discourse revealed was a complex process of appropriation and reaccentuation of others' words in the chain of communication. Each individual utterance within this intertextual chain of communication was in turn created at the crossroads of speaker, topic as hero, addressivity, and speech genres. In the process of dialogic struggle in interpreting and producing utterances, students' ideological becoming did occur in the CMC context. Results also indicated that many L2 students added their multiple voices to the academic conversation in CMC not only as novices in the discourse community but also as experienced professionals, or cultural agents, or as participants with unique perspectives and specializations.

## Table of Contents

List of Tables.....	xiii
List of Figures.....	xiii
<b>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
Purpose of the Study.....	1
Statement of the Problem.....	2
Conceptual Framework for the Study: The Utterance.....	7
Dialogism: Toward the Unity of the Individual and the Social.....	8
Heteroglossia: Multiple Voices in Conflict.....	9
Carnival: Toward Transformation and Renewal.....	10
Research Questions.....	11
Overview of the Next Chapters.....	11
<b>CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW.....</b>	<b>13</b>
Changing Climate in Writing Research in L1 and L2.....	13
Writing as Cognitive Process: Focusing on the Individual.....	14
Writing as Social Practice: Focusing on Discourse Community.....	16
Beyond Discourse Community Metaphor: Insights from Bakhtin.....	18
Bakhtin-based Research in L1 and L2 Composition.....	21
Review of the L1 Literature.....	21
Appropriation and Resistance: How to Read Student Writing.....	21
Internally Persuasive Discourse: How to Respond to Student Writing.....	24
Ideological Becoming: How to Facilitate Alterity.....	26
Resistant Pedagogies: Rethinking Genres and Academic Discourse.....	29
Review of the L2 Literature.....	31
Situating My Study in Bakhtin-based Composition Studies.....	33
Computer-Mediated Communication.....	35



Uses of CMC in Classroom Settings.....	36
Supporting Alternative Power Structures in CMC.....	36
Enhancing Learning Opportunities in CMC.....	40
Research on the Nature of CMC Discourse.....	43
Research on the Language of CMC.....	44
Research on the Interaction and Discourse Patterns of CMC.....	46
CMC Discourse as a Nexus of Contexts, Interactions, and Texts.....	49
Response to the Literature.....	52
<b>CHAPTER 3: METHOD.....</b>	<b>53</b>
Methodological Issues.....	53
The Research Site and the Participants.....	55
Data Sources and Procedures.....	58
Classroom Observations.....	59
Background Interview with the Students and the Teacher.....	60
Discourse-based Interviews with the Students and the Teacher.....	60
Printouts of CMC Texts.....	62
Self-reflective Essay on Written Discussion.....	63
My Own Reflective Research Journal.....	63
Data Analysis.....	64
The Researcher as Human Instrument.....	65
Assuring Credibility of the Study.....	66
<b>CHAPTER 4: THE SOCIOCULTURAL CONTEXT.....</b>	<b>68</b>
Overview of the Analysis Running through Chapters 4, 5, and 6.....	68
<b>LAYER 3: THE SOCIOCULTURAL CONTEXT.....</b>	<b>71</b>
The Nature of the Members' Resources.....	72
The Students and Their Backgrounds.....	73
The Students' Responses to the Diversity of the Class.....	90
The Course on Psycholinguistics.....	92

How the Teacher Designed the Course and Chose Course Themes.....	93
The Students' Responses to the Course Themes.....	95
Assignments and Forms of Evaluation.....	100
Psycholinguistic Project.....	100
Take-Home Essay Exams.....	101
Self-analysis of Oral Comprehension and Written Discussion.....	102
The Students' Initial Responses to the Assignments.....	102
The Students' Eventual Learning Experiences with the Assignments.....	105
Classroom Speech Activities.....	106
Oral Speech Activity.....	109
Synchronous CMC Activity.....	114
Asynchronous CMC Activity.....	115
Theme 1: I Could Behave Like Don Quixote.....	118
Theme 2: I Could Experience Heteroglossia.....	120
Theme 3: I Could Create My Own Structure in Carnival.....	124
Theme 4: I Could Expand My Definition of Learning.....	126
Theme 5: I Didn't Like It Very Much, But.....	127
<b>CHAPTER 5: LAYER 2: CMC DISCURSIVE PRACTICE.....</b>	<b>134</b>
Intertextual Rhythm of Conversation in CMC: Appropriating Others'	
Words.....	135
Commentary.....	147
Intertextual Abductive Musings.....	149
Intertextual Links across Time and Space: Homecoming Festival... ..	158
Commentary.....	164
Intertextual Balance between Centripetal and Centrifugal Forces.....	165
Group 1 Dynamics.....	166
Group 2 Dynamics.....	173
Group 3 Dynamics.....	181
Commentary.....	190

A Counter-example to Intertextuality.....	193
Methodological Issues in the Intertextual Analysis.....	197
<b>CHAPTER 6: LAYER 1: COMPONENTS OF UTTERANCE.....</b>	<b>210</b>
Speaker.....	212
Commentary.....	221
Topic as Hero.....	222
Commentary.....	234
Addressivity.....	235
Classmates as Friends/Allies.....	237
Classmates as Strangers.....	245
“The Others” in the Group.....	249
Speech Genres.....	250
Commentary.....	264
Reciprocal Simultaneity of the Four Components in an Utterance.....	265
<b>CHAPTER 7: DISCUSSION.....</b>	<b>269</b>
Discussion of the Findings.....	269
CMC Discourse and the Sociocultural Context.....	270
The Members’ Resources.....	270
The Nature of the Course.....	271
The Teacher’s Role in CMC.....	272
The Students’ Perceptions of CMC and Their Evolving Sense of Their Roles in CMC.....	273
CMC Discursive Practice: Appropriating and Reaccentuating.....	277
Utterance as a Nexus of Speaker, Topic, Addressivity, and Speech Genres.....	279
Ideological Becoming and Answerability: The Nature of Learning in CMC.....	282
L2 Learners as Co-participants of a Graduate Course.....	284

Limitations of the Study.....	287
Implications of the Study.....	290
Implications for Literacy Studies.....	290
Implications for English for Academic Purposes.....	291
Implications for CMC Research.....	292
Conclusion: Toward a Critical Pedagogy.....	294
<b>REFERENCES.....</b>	<b>296</b>
<b>VITA.....</b>	<b>311</b>

### **List of Tables**

Table 3-1: The Students' Biographical Information.....	56
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### **List of Figures**

Figure 4-1: Multidimensional Model of an Utterance.....	69
Figure 4-2: Seating Chart.....	74
Figure 4-3: Messages on Blackboard.....	116

# **CHAPTER 1**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Purpose of the Study**

As computer-mediated communication (CMC) activities are increasingly being incorporated as a new kind of literacy practice in many academic disciplines, issues arise about how students produce and interpret CMC texts in a particular sociocultural institutional context, what learning to read/write in CMC involves, and whether the process of disciplinary learning involved in CMC is the same for first language (L1) and second language (L2) students. From a Bakhtinian dialogic perspective, learning to engage in any meaningful speech activities (both oral and written) involves “living through concrete histories of reading, writing, talking about and using texts in the heterogeneous domains of a social practice (e.g., in class and out, in talk and text, in formal and informal settings), and then drawing on and transforming those histories to act with others in the present and project some desired future” (Prior, 2001, p. 79). It is this complex interplay of texts, discursive practices, and sociocultural contexts that I set out to understand and investigate in this present study, drawing upon a Bakhtinian understanding of the dialogic nature of language.

The purpose of this study was thus to explore the complexity of discursive practices of advanced students involved in the construction of CMC texts in a particular educational setting. I chose to study students’ utterances produced in online discussions primarily for two reasons: 1) CMC contexts may offer new opportunities for the linguistic, academic, social, and cultural development of students in the process of interpreting and producing utterances online; and 2) Bakhtin’s constructs, rich and evocative descriptions of discourse acquisition and use, had seldom been used to describe CMC activities that are being increasingly incorporated as disciplinary writing in educational settings.

## Statement of the Problem

There is a well-established body of literature that adopts a sociocultural perspective in its exploration of the relationship between writing and the construction of disciplinary knowledge (Bazerman, 1981, 1988; Berkenkotter & Huckin, 1995; Myers, 1985). The focus of this work has been upon written texts and the nature of the discursive and communicative practices of academic writers in specific disciplinary contexts. This reflects an increasing recognition of the complex relationship between written texts and the social and cultural practices that surround their interpretation and production (Candlin & Hyland, 1999). Central to this line of study is a larger argument that suggests writing (or any discourse event) must always be understood as situated activity:

Actually writing happens in moments that are richly equipped with tools (material and semiotic) and populated with others (past, present, and future). When seen as situated activity, writing does not stand alone as the discrete act of a writer, but emerges as a confluence of many streams of activity: reading, talking, observing, acting, making, thinking, and feeling as well as transcribing words on paper (Prior, 1998, p. xi).

Taking this notion of situated activity, Prior (2001) further argued that Bakhtinian perspectives on language, perspectives grounded in the dialogic notions of utterance, lead us to make a more critical move in describing discourse acquisition and use by allowing us to “reimagine language as concrete, dispersed streams of history, streams that are always simultaneously social and personal” as it is “formed in a sociohistoric chain of situated utterances (oral or written)” (p. 59).

Among the studies that drew upon such Bakhtinian understandings of discourse, Ivanic (1998) has been particularly influential on the present study. She examined the varied ways students’ texts (e.g., academic writing of mature students) display intertextual and interdiscursive relations. She analyzed the way students quoted from other texts, finding differences in their stances toward the quotes and in the extent to which the voices of the texts were infiltrating the surrounding discourse. She used text-based interviews to explore the origins of specific wordings and phrasings, and found that

the student writers were able to articulate some of the origins not only for words and phrases, but for larger discourse types (certain styles of sentences, particular topical or organizational patterns). Of particular interest is the way Ivanic connected the students' texts with the production of complexly negotiated identities, with a micropolitics of social affiliation, disaffiliation, and temporizing. Having revealed the complexity involved in disciplinary writing, Ivanic suggested that future researchers might use Bakhtin's conceptual framework to investigate students' texts created in a variety of speech activities other than the academic assignments on which she primarily focused in her study.

Similarly, Hyland (2000) offered a sophisticated account of social interactions in published academic writing (e.g., book reviews, scientific letter or report, article abstracts, etc). Drawing on discourse analysis, corpus linguistics, and the voices of professional insiders, Hyland showed what close textual analyses can reveal about the social practices and institutional ideologies of different academic communities. As with Ivanic, he primarily focused on the practice of academic research writing in his exploration of the relationships between the cultures of academic communities and their discursual practices. In offering suggestions for further research, Hyland reiterated the pressing need for addressing students' engagement with a vast range of different literate activities embedded in a particular sociocultural context.

As Ivanic and Hyland noted, despite the heightened attention that has been given to the sociocultural context of literate activities in which texts are embedded, there is a potentially significant void: Although many of the studies took a sociocultural perspective and discussed at great length the complex relationship between texts and practices and the importance of exploring text production and literacy practices in context (e.g., Bazerman, 1994; Candlin & Hyland, 1999; Hyland, 2000; Swales, 1998), this work was primarily concerned with the traditional academic texts of established academic writers as disciplinary experts.

Today, to add to the more traditional written texts in the academic discourse community, we have electronic texts in the form of email and computer conferences, and



Web-based resources, including hypertext documents. Researchers have not yet robustly examined cultural, historical, and social dimensions of CMC texts and of learners engaged in CMC activities that are being increasingly incorporated as an intrinsic part of discursive practices in many academic fields. Demands on CMC in an educational setting are steadily increasing due to the increasing opportunities for dissemination, public discussion, and criticism of such discourse offered by the many new forms of CMC. Students in the academy need to learn how to (re)interpret and (re)present their work for readers other than their teachers, positioning themselves in dialogic relationship to an academic field of critical discourse that is becoming electronically-linked. There is a growing need to frame the acquisition and use of discourse in a context that includes such computer-mediated communication (de Pourbaix, 2000; Lea, 2001).

Asynchronous bulletin board discussion, among other CMC tools, can open up new avenues for reading, writing, discussion, and learning. The asynchronous nature of computer conferencing allows students to tailor class participation to fit within their lives and locations (John, 1998). As a result, all voices can be given equal opportunity to contribute to class discussion. By taking the perspective of peers with diverse backgrounds and trying to understand their expectations and potential reactions (Bonk, Appelman, & Hay, 1996), a community of learners can be formed that is unique to many of the participants' educational experiences. Using computer conferencing for learning can also support students' reflexivity, allowing them to make constant connections between the things they are learning in the course and their real-life situations (Nunan, 1999; Yagelski, 2000). My investigation of asynchronous CMC as a focal speech activity embedded in a particular graduate course is encouraged by this recognition of the learning depth possible in this interactive, social, and technological context.

In addition to being vehicles of the social construction of knowledge among students, texts created in a CMC environment, like any other texts in any discourse context, assume a crucial importance because they reveal the participants' intentions and relationships, and simultaneously indicate the nature of various social activities. However, unlike other written texts, the interactive nature of CMC (with the alternation of speakers

in a chain of communication) allows us to see more clearly in a fresh medium the dialogic essence of an utterance. Harrison and Stephen (1992) refer to computer mediated exchange as dialogic text, “with the advantages of oral and written discourse simultaneously.... Dialogic text allows us to re-appropriate and preserve some of the interactive, conversational qualities of knowledge production lost since the development of printed text” (p. 183). They point out that dialogue is the most ancient form of scholarly exchange, and observe the growth of a new form of collaborative scholarship that is supported, and perhaps encouraged, by a computer mediated environment: a literary form that incorporates “multiple textual agents’ possessing independent authorial voices” (p. 190). The fact that we can observe the boundaries of utterances in the asynchronous CMC because CMC messages, just like rejoinders in everyday dialogue, were clearly demarcated by a change of authors (speakers) allowed us to treat all CMC entries as utterances however varied they may be in terms of their length, their content, and their compositional structure. For this reason, it is particularly relevant to consider the contextualized meaning of CMC texts, by attempting to perceive them as constructed in an unending dialogic web of cross-connected utterances and responses, each piece of CMC text, each utterance, depending on its occasion and context for its very existence, for its comprehensibility, as Bakhtin had imagined.

Another issue that needs to be addressed concerning disciplinary writing (including CMC) is the issue of nonnative writers. Given the fact that international students who participate in American college and graduate classrooms operate in contexts that are not their native cultural contexts, and they engage in writing tasks in English, a question arises as to whether learning to read/write in a discipline involves the same process for American students and international students. In *Listening to the world: Cultural issues in academic writing*, Fox (1994) points to the complexity of what it means for L2 students to do academic writing in English. She particularly highlights the students' resistance to academic writing, “the resistance that arises from being a cultural alien in an institution that acknowledges no other than the Western view” (p. 74). For Fox, forcing students to adopt the way of writing of a new culture inevitably “touches the

core of the writer's identity,” thus creating some sort of resistance. Even though Fox did succeed in sensitizing us to the very struggle L2 writers experience in learning to write within a new culture, there might be, as Spack (1997, 1998) warns, a danger in viewing students' resistance to academic writing through a lens focused only on cultural differences.

In fact, research comparing the rhetorical traditions of different cultures has served for several decades as a paradigm explaining second language writing (Kaplan, 1966, 1967; Connor, 1996). However, there is a growing voice among L2 writing researchers that research in contrastive rhetoric should adapt itself to both changes in how L2 learning is viewed and how literacy, in general, is viewed. Bloch and Chi (1995), for example, challenged the idea that the norms that seem to exist in one language or culture predetermine what an individual is likely to be able to accomplish in another, showing that in a comparison of the use of citations in Chinese and English academic discourse, Chinese rhetoric is as complex and ever changing as is Western rhetoric. Likewise, a substantial body of literature has emphasized the situated nature of language and learning and demonstrated that learners who are actively engaged can acquire unfamiliar linguistic practices that are enacted and promoted in new contexts (Spack, 1998; Zamel, 1997; Casanave, 1995). It is my understanding that in order to avoid our popular tendency to describe L2 writers as “trapped by their home discourses” (Zamel, 1997, p. 347) or as “endlessly reencoding the abstract rules and conventions of monologic discourses” (Prior, 1995a, p. 78), we need a new conceptual framework that would account for L2 writers’ heteroglossic world of creating meaning where individual, cultural, and contextual factors are dialogically played out.

In response to the pressing need for the kaleidoscopic lens that captures the dynamic and complex processes of L2 writing, Bakhtin's concept of language as dialogic, heteroglossic, and carnivalesque seems to serve as a very productive paradigm within which we can conceptualize writing tasks as situated activity and to view second language writers as actively engaged in constructing utterances from sources that touch their lives multidimensionally – their different personal histories, value systems, interests,

and definitions of the field, people in the immediate environment, the specific writing tasks embedded in a required course.

Drawing on Bakhtin's framework, my study integrates two lines of research on disciplinary writing and nonnative writers: investigating nonnative speakers as members of courses with native speakers, and addressing nonnative speakers' acquisition and use of discourse in English in relation to their heteroglossic world of creating meaning in a new rhetorical, cultural context. As Hyland recently argued in a colloquium that addressed changing currents in second language writing research (Matsuda, Canagarajah, Harklau, Hyland, & Warschauer, 2003), a critical move in understanding L2 writers can be made when we begin to see that there is no single, self-evident, and non-contestable literacy, as dominant ideologists suggest, but a wide variety of practices relevant for particular times and purposes. Recognizing these pluralities not only reveals that "potentially contested cultural assumptions underlie texts," but also "replaces the native versus non-native writer distinction with one emphasizing the variable expertise of novices and experts in particular contexts" (p. 169). Bakhtin's framework of utterance that I will present in the following section allows me to imagine better each student (both L1 and L2) in the classroom as defined by their "human agency," "a relationship that is constantly co-constructed and renegotiated with those around the individual and with the society at large" (Lantolf & Pavlenko, 2001, p. 148). Within this framework, learners are conceptualized "first and foremost as individuals whose formation as thinking and learning beings depends crucially on the concrete circumstances of their specific histories as language learners [users] and as members of the communities of practice to which they belong and to which they aspire" (p. 155).

### **Conceptual Framework for the Study: The Utterance**

Primarily known as a theorist of social language, Mikhail Bakhtin (1981, 1986) proposed that the basic unit of analysis for understanding language (oral or written) is the "utterance." Whereas the "word" is abstract and removed from the speaker and listener,

the “utterance” is concrete and can only be understood in the context of particular people in actual social and historical situations (1986, p. 71). Bakhtin's emphasis on the need to study utterances lies in his effort to provide an account of the principles that organize utterances and their contexts. Three important concepts lie at the center of Bakhtinian understanding of an utterance are dialogism, heteroglossia, and carnival (Clark & Holquist, 1984; Quantz & O'Connor, 1988). Bakhtin's emphasis on dialogism and heteroglossia provides a basis for understanding and describing complex and contradictory speech activity by placing an utterance in the flow of multiple individual and social forces in conflict. His interest in carnival makes possible our recognition that at least some speech activities have regenerative democratic impulses.

### **Dialogism: Toward the Unity of the Individual and the Social**

Bakhtin's dialogism postulates the speaking self as “dynamically situated within both an interactionally and an ideologically complex world” (Dyson, 1995, p. 8). Bakhtin uses, on the one hand, the concept of dialogue to focus on the continuous flow of interaction and response among individuals. In his view, verbal performance, whether oral or written, responds in some way to previous performances and, in turn, calls forth a response from others (Volosinov, 1973). On the other hand, dialogic consciousness is historically and ideologically located within material and symbolic realms. Clark and Holquist (1984) noted in their biography of Bakhtin that “ideology” is his term for the world of signs, both in the world and in the psyche (p. 224). Because individuals must construct their private thoughts and their public communication within the limit of language opportunities available at a given time and place, the individual human utterance is seen as formed within historical and ideological constraints. In sum, Bakhtin's (1981) dialogism suggests that we are not only interacting with others in using language, we are also using others' words that are “ideologically saturated” to represent our own meanings (p. 271).

With Bakhtin's dialogism, the dualistic conceptualization of the individual and the society can be rejected. In its place, a dynamic concept of dialogue between inward and outward speech acts offers a way to understand the unification of speaking self and society, one that includes an understanding of the material representation of history and ideology.

### **Heteroglossia: Multiple Voices in Conflict**

While the notion of dialogism unifies the traditional distinction between the individual and the social, Bakhtin's use of the concept of heteroglossia prohibits a completely unified utterance to be formed by individuals or communities. This is so because producing the utterance requires more than one individual and each individual must be understood to speak with multiple voices. Drawing on several of Bakhtin's texts, Emerson and Holquist (1981) noted that heteroglossia is “the base condition governing the operation of meaning in any utterance” (p. 428). In Bakhtin's (1981) words:

At any given moment of its historical existence, language is heteroglot from top to bottom: it represents the co-existence of socio-ideological contradictions between the present and the past, between differing socio-ideological groups in the present, between tendencies, schools, circles and so forth, all given a bodily form. These ‘languages’ of heteroglossia intersect each other in a variety of ways, forming new socially typifying languages. (p. 291)

Probing the complex and multiple languages that exist in any society, Bakhtin identified the difference between the various discursive strata within a national language, the condition that Bakhtin called "heteroglossia." This term is most fully explored in “Discourse in the Novel” (1981), where he looks at language as the heart of any society. In this essay, he focused on the nature of the utterance, conceived as the place where struggles between centripetal forces whose aim is to centralize and unify and centrifugal forces whose purpose is to decentralize are played out in miniature. The conflict between these two forces, as Bakhtin claimed, animates every concrete utterance made by any speaking subject: “The utterance not only answers the requirements of its own language as individualized embodiment of a speech act, but it answers the requirements of

heteroglossia as well; it is in fact an active participant in such speech diversity” (Clark & Holquist, 1984, p. 14).

### **Carnival: Toward Transformation and Renewal**

Through the concept of dialogism and heteroglossia, Bakhtin offered us a framework for examining ideological continuity and conflict. As the multiple voices within the individual and within the community struggle to control the direction of acceptable utterances, certain ideological voices may be silenced or rejected while dominant voices are canonized or become dogmatic. With the concept of carnival, Bakhtin strove to “bust open and transform traditional, closed discourses” by permitting and even encouraging nonlegitimated voice within a community of well-maintained legitimated voices (Lensmire, 1994, p. 371). Because the dominant ideology seeks to author the social order as a unified, fixed, and complete text, the carnivalesque text provides a social sphere that embraces “incompleteness, becoming, and ambiguity” (Clark & Holquist, 1984, p. 310).

Carnival, as described in *Rabelais and His World* (Bakhtin, 1984), is a public occasion marked by festivity, laughter, licentiousness, excess, and grotesqueness. It creates an arena where free expression of nonlegitimated voices can compete with the ideologies of the status quo. The carnival spirit is fundamentally opposed to all hierarchies in epistemology, all canons and dogmas, for in carnival everything is moving and changing. For Bakhtin, carnival's free, democratic setting promoted a capacity to create and sustain an alternative sociocultural framework. He wrote:

Carnival festivities offered a completely different, nonofficial, extraecclesiastical and extrapolitical aspect of the world, of man, and of human relations; they built a second world and a second life outside officialdom, a world in which all medieval people participated more or less, in which they lived during a given time of the year. (p. 6)

This alternative community is, however, more than an escape from “real” life. Bakhtin claims that festive humor and laughter keeps alive a sense of variety and change allowing

this alternative social framework to challenge the official order. In other words, carnival “engages the serious world in direct, open opposition” (Quantz & O'Connor, 1988, p. 101). The concept of carnival, therefore, can provide an example of one site where the nonlegitimated voice can find communal expression and establish the potential for eventual transformation and renewal as participants “take up new relations not only with the people around them, but also with their world” (Lensmire, 1994, p. 374).

### **Research Questions**

These Bakhtinian concepts, dialogism, heteroglossia, and carnival allow for a description of how language works as a “speech activity that is contextualized in terms of historical, institutional, cultural, and individual factors” (Wertsch, 1991, p. 97), of how utterances are to different degrees “animated” in the context of dialogic relationships. Based on this conceptual framework, I examined graduate students’ engagement with CMC texts in a classroom setting by focusing on the contextualized meaning of texts and by attempting to perceive them as occasions of utterances. The following research questions guided my approach:

- 1) How do contextual factors (biographical, interpersonal, institutional, and sociocultural contexts) contribute to students’ experience of CMC speech activities embedded in a graduate seminar?
- 2) What are the characteristics of CMC texts that are constructed from the complex interplay among diverse contextual factors embedded in the class?
- 3) What is the nature of an utterance in a CMC activity?

### **Overview of the Next Chapters**

The next chapter, Chapter 2, includes a review of the literature in areas that are relevant to my study. Chapter 3 details the procedures used to carry out my study including the different data sources and analytical strategies used to describe CMC texts.



In Chapter 4, 5, and 6, I present the results in the following interrelated dimensions of utterance: 1) the sociocultural context; 2) CMC discursive practice; and 3) components of an utterance. Finally in Chapter 7, I discuss the results, point to some limitations concerning my research, and offer suggestions for future research and educational practice related to the use of Bakhtinian constructs in understanding classroom discourse and of ways to introduce asynchronous CMC in classrooms.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

This chapter presents a review of theoretical and empirical work in areas that are relevant to my study. Because my interests are closely tied to discourse practices in CMC speech activities embedded in a particular graduate course, I begin with a discussion of theories of the discourse acquisition and use, drawing upon studies in literacy research and critical discourse analysis, and then outline my theoretical approach to this study. My purpose here is to give the reader a sense of the changing climate in which discourse is viewed and to clarify upon which view my study is situated. Following the discussion, I review relevant literature on Bakhtin-based research to establish a context for the consideration of the applicability of Bakhtinian concepts to my present study. I then review literature on the uses of CMC in educational settings, providing a rationale for choosing CMC as a focal speech activity for my study. I conclude by discussing CMC discourse as a nexus of contexts, interactions, and texts.

#### **Changing Climate in Writing Research in L1 and L2**

To investigate the large questions of my inquiry about how CMC texts are constructed in a particular sociocultural context, it is necessary to clarify upon what view of writing (or discourse) this study is based. In both L1 and L2 writing research, views have changed during the past thirty years. The focus in writing research has moved from writing as product, to writing as cognitive process, to writing as social practice. Here, I present an overview of this paradigm shift in both L1 and L2 research, firstly focusing on the tension between the cognitivist view and social view and then turning to the recent attention paid to the post-structuralist view of discourse as historically shaped in a chain of utterances.

## Writing as Cognitive Process: Focusing on the Individual

In the early 1980's, writing researchers started paying attention to writing processes instead of considering only final written products, under the assumption that in order to teach writing effectively, one must know as much as possible about how students write. The cognitivists' major contributions to a new perception of the role of the student was in their inquiry into the process of writing and its emphasis on the teacher's intervention in the recursive stages of the students' writing process. Based on cognitive psychology, this approach suggested that both language and learning are part of development and of cognitive stages and that by learning about the stages a writer goes through and by intervening during these stages, writing teachers might facilitate the development from one stage to the next. In attempting to understand the nature of writing, the cognitivists explored the nature of these stages, how they unfold or fail to unfold in time, and how they are involved in the composing process.

Among the studies on L1 writing processes, Emig's (1971) *The Composing Processes of Twelfth Graders* was the first published study to apply empirical research methods of cognitive psychology (protocol analysis) to student writers composing text. She observed that the stages of writing were the same for all the students she investigated and that these stages were recursive rather than linear. That is, Emig argued that good writers employ a series of steps – broadly defined as prewriting, writing, and revising – and that these steps are often revisited during composition. Believing that there are “elements, moments, and stages within the composing process which can be distinguished and characterized in some detail” (p. 33), Emig called attention to new possibilities for teaching writing, possibilities that accounted for the teacher's ability to intervene in the composing process and guide students toward more effective writing. In emphasizing the importance for the teacher to know how students compose and why they compose the way they do, Emig decentered the traditional teacher's authority, while at the same time privileging the work and perspectives of the student.

Emig's technique of “composing aloud” proved of “immediate and practical use to an entire generation of oppositionists” (Harris, 1997, p. 58). Emig's interest in writing

as a process was quickly adopted by those who had shifted their focus from written products to the experiences and perspectives of the student (Faigley & Witte, 1981; Flower & Hayes, 1981, 1984; Hayes & Flower, 1983). This heightened interest in writers' composing process eventually came to be seen as the cognitivist view or writing as problem solving. Flower and Hayes (1981) were then very influential in the cognitivist movement. Based upon a greater number of observed subjects, both experienced and inexperienced writers from inside and outside of academia, Flower and Hayes observed that the mental process of writing consisted of three stages: the planning stage, the translating stage, and the revising stage (pp. 372-374). During the planning stage, writers generate ideas, organize them, and set specific and general goals for the completion of their work. During the translating stage, writers transcribe their thought onto paper in a form that their readers might be able to understand. In the revising stage, writers evaluate what they have already written and make changes to it. Based on this observation, they concluded that writing is a problem-solving, cognitive process in which writers initiate and guide themselves through the act of making meaning.

Influenced by the studies on L1 writing processes, in the early 1980's, researchers started developing an interest in L2 learners' composing processes. They investigated how skilled and unskilled L2 writers wrote in English by using interviews or compose-aloud techniques (Jones, 1985; Raimes, 1985; Spack, 1984; Zamel, 1982, 1983). They found that L2 writing was problem-solving, a process of discovering meaning just as L1 writing was. Zamel (1983), for example, in her replication of Emig's (1971) use of protocol analysis in a study of advanced ESL student writers, discovered that many of her L2 writers' strategies and manners of text composition were similar in nature (recursive as opposed to linear) to those of advanced L1 writers.

What is most striking about the cognitive approaches in L1 and L2 composition studies is a profound dedication to the student and his or her inner workings of mind. These new theories all shifted the focus of composition studies "from the composed product to the composing process, from the teacher's monologue to the student's dialogue, and from the text as the nucleus of the writing classroom to the student as the

locus of knowledge” (Weisser, 2002, p. 11). While this view directed us to acknowledge the cognitive dimensions of writing and to see the learner as an active processor of information, it neglected the actual processes of language use. Put simply, there was little systematic understanding of the ways language is used in particular contexts in these cognitive models of writing.

### **Writing as Social Practice: Focusing on Discourse Community**

Contemporary reviewers of writing research (e.g., Faigley, 1986; Harris, 1997; Weisser, 2002) point out how much has happened in the last few decades, suggesting that no development has been more influential than the emphasis of writing as social practice in recent composition studies. The social view of writing claims that the “processes of writing are social in character instead of originating within individual writers” (Faigley, 1986, p. 528). The new paradigm of writing arose partially from the criticism leveled against the proponents of the cognitive process view. During the mid to late 1980s, the cognitivist view of writing with its major focus on the individual writers’ mental processes began to receive criticism because of its failure to consider the context in which writers were situated as they composed. Bizzell (1982), for example, criticizing cognitivists for overemphasizing the universal, fundamental structures of thought and language, claimed that “thinking and language use can never occur free of a social context that conditions them” (p. 217).

As a new paradigm, the social view sees writing as social practice that is embedded within a specific community. Therefore, the concept of “discourse community” as embodying discourse conventions that its members share became important in its earlier discussion. As Bizzell stated:

What is most significant about members of a discourse community is not their personal preferences, prejudices, and so on, but rather the expectations they share by virtue of belonging to that particular community. These expectations are embodied in the discourse conventions, which are in turn conditioned by the community’s work. (p. 219)

Bizzell's perception of the discourse community contended that writing should not be viewed solely as an individually-oriented, inner-directed cognitive process, but as much as an acquired response to the discourse conventions that arise from preferred ways of creating and communicating knowledge within particular communities. Across the discipline of English studies, Swales (1990), a well-known proponent and definer of genre theory, defined discourse communities as "sociohistorical networks that form in order to work towards sets of common goals" (p. 9), emphasizing that writing is created by a member of a discourse community, influenced by and influencing that community's traditions, discourse conventions, and textual and topic requirements and constraints.

Discourse communities for university and graduate students and academic professionals are specifically called "academic discourse communities," whose members share a framework of knowledge, discourse conventions including specialized terminologies, a context for everyday academic activity, and so forth (Bazerman, 1988). A great deal of L1 studies show that expectations, represented as discourse conventions, adequate knowledge, and ways of thinking are different across disciplines and even different among subdisciplines within a given discipline (Faigley and Hansen, 1985; Herrington, 1985; McCarthy, 1997). The studies all illustrate the distinctiveness of each classroom: in different classrooms, different issues are addressed, different lines of reasoning used, different roles expected from students, different functions provided to students, and different ways of evaluating students' work used. Taken as a whole, the studies tell us that students need to make necessary shifts in discourse when moving from one discipline to another, or from one class to another; from one academic activity to another.

In the field of L2 composition studies, from the early 1990s, L2 scholars began calling for a shift of focus from the process view of writing to the role of the context in which and for which L2 writers compose. L2 writing researchers set out to examine the texts of non-native undergraduate and graduate students as they struggled for membership into the discourse community of their academic discipline. Among studies related to disciplinary enculturation among L2 writers, Dong (1996) investigated how

non-native writers of English learn to cite references for knowledge transformations, Gosden (1996) interviewed Japanese doctoral students preparing to write their first scientific research articles for publication in English, and Master (1995) examined Southeast Asian students' difficulties with article use in a second language acquisition graduate class. Schneider and Fujishima (1995) also reported on a L2 graduate student who was unsuccessful in his graduate studies despite high levels of motivation and discipline, concluding that the participant's poor academic performance stemmed not only from his lack of English proficiency or interference from his culture, but also from his unfamiliarity with the academic culture of the U. S. university.

Seen from the literature reviewed thus far in relation to both L1 and L2 students' enculturation or socialization into discourse communities, the enculturation into the practices of disciplinary communities involves learning the values, the practices, and the rhetorical conventions of the community into which one seeks membership.

### **Beyond Discourse Community Metaphor: Insights from Bakhtin**

Although the earlier social view contributed to our increased understanding of writing as social practice by invoking the concept of discourse community and showing how texts are shaped by forces beyond the individual writer, the notion of discourse community has some caveats. As Casanave (1995) noted, it may mislead us to the view that texts are all constructed through the central guiding force of some singular, unified discourse. Such a view clearly ignores the real contextual complexity in which any utterance is made. It does not adequately capture a heteroglossia, dialogism, and multiplicity that exists within the discourse of both the individual and community.

The conflicts or heteroglossia of a discourse and community were indeed overlooked in many of the early social constructivist research on writing in academic settings. Several scholars in L1 writing research have begun to acknowledge that disciplines are not nearly as singular and unified as the concept "discourse community" suggests. Even Bizzell (1992), who originally described discourse communities in terms

of shared values and expectations in her earlier work (1982), later emphasized that conflicting voices and forces are ever present within a given discourse. Very similar to Bakhtin's emphasis on heteroglossia, Bizzell argued that "the academic discourse community is not such a stable entity." Rather, it is "more fraught with contradiction, more polyvocal" than we have typically realized (p. 258). Harris (1989) also questioned the unity of a community by noting that the make-up of a community is further complicated by the fact that a member of a discipline always participates in other discourse communities as well:

One does not first decide to act as a member of one community rather than some other, and then attempt to conform to its (rather than some other's) set of beliefs and practices. Rather, one is always simultaneously a part of several discourses, several communities, is always already committed to a number of conflicting beliefs and practices. (p. 19)

In Bakhtinian term, what Bizzell and Harris see as the instability and diversity of a community and its discourse is emblematic of the dialogic nature of language and the centrifugal, stratifying forces of heteroglossia that keeps tension with unitary forces of discourse.

L2 writing researchers such as Prior and Casanave who identified their studies as socioculturally or sociopolitically oriented have also questioned the view of learning to write in a discipline simply as an enculturation process into a discourse community. Prior (1995a, 1998, 2001) noted that previous studies of disciplinary enculturation emphasized the shared nature of rules and conventions in a discipline or a classroom and did not fully address conflicts and negotiations among people involved in a particular setting of writing. Casanave (1992, 1995, 2002) also reported that students learned to construct each their own unique texts from a multiplicity of interactions among the writer, the writing tasks, and a variety of resources in local, institutional, and disciplinary contexts. In Prior and Casanave's view, the focus on academic discourse communities might mislead us to see only positive things such as consensus, conversation among peers, and shared acceptance of a code of values and assumptions, ignoring the very real ideological struggle at stake for the individual writer in a heterogeneous world of discourse and



community. Following her earlier arguments, Casanave (2003) recently urged that future L2 research still needs to explore ways that “L2 writing done by particular people in particular settings reflects and is influenced by unequal power relations and complex social interactions among many kinds of interested actors” (p. 96). Similarly, Weisser (2002) noted that writing researchers have not fully inquired into “the political implications of discourse: the asymmetrical power relations among different language users, and the degree to which discourse is ideological and political” (p.2).

In my view, it is fair to say that writing studies taken as whole have progressed in both scope and complexity over the last few decades. Since its birth as an academic discipline, writing studies has gradually expanded its focus from the individual writer, to social notions of how knowledge is generated and maintained in a particular discourse community, to more political investigations of discourse. As a conceptual framework to help elaborate on, strengthen earlier studies on discourse community and to further address some critical issues of ideology and power relations in discourse, I believe the Bakhtinian concept of “utterance” is very useful.

Seen from a Bakhtinian view, language is never wholly unified; heteroglossia exists everywhere, and because language is always alive, always living in the everyday world of concrete utterances, “this stratification and diversity of speech will spread wider and penetrate to ever deeper levels” (1984, p. xix). In other words, even within highly developed disciplines with well-defined conventions, no living society is ever truly closed. Its centripetal forces are always in conflict with the centrifugal forces of heteroglossia and, through such conflict, languages, communities, and societies are always constantly changing. As Ritchie (1989) explains,

The language of the individual, of the community, or of the classroom is never a closed system, but instead is humming with “heteroglossia,” a word Bakhtin uses to describe the rich mixture of genres, professions, personae, values, purposes, lifestyles, and ages which resonate against each other in all language situations. (p. 156)

Bakhtin understood that all “language is realized in the form of individual concrete utterances” (1986, p. 60), and it is this focus on real-life utterances and real-life contexts

of human beings speaking and writing to one another that allows us to see more clearly the conflicting, decentralizing forces inherent within any discourse community.

### **Bakhtin-based Research in L1 and L2 Composition**

Given the richness of his theoretical constructs, Bakhtin has been extremely influential in discussing a wide range of research subjects and theoretical approaches in recent composition studies. In this section, I will examine how Bakhtin's ideas have been used to shape a lively dialogue among L1 and L2 composition researchers. Such an examination will not only help to situate Bakhtin in a dialogic relation with those who have already appropriated his ideas, but will also help establish a context for the consideration of the applicability of Bakhtinian concepts and Bakhtin-based studies to my present research inquiry on CMC discourse.

### **Review of the L1 Literature**

The recent dialogue in composition studies revolving around Bakhtin focuses on these four major areas: 1) reading appropriation and resistance in student writing; 2) responding to student writing in an internally persuasive way; 3) creating a context for transformation and renewal; and 4) redefining academic genres and discourse.

#### Appropriation and Resistance: How to Read Student Writing

If dialogism and heteroglossia outlined in Chapter 1 serve as the organizing principles of an utterance, *appropriation*, which derives largely from the writings of Bakhtin (1981), is a term for describing the very process of producing an utterance. Wertsch (1998) interpreted the term as the process of “taking something that belongs to others and making it one's own” (p. 53). In Bakhtin's (1981) words:

The word in language is half someone else's. It becomes "one's own" only when the speaker populates it with his own intention, his own accent, when he appropriates the word, adapting it to his own semantic and expressive intention.

Prior to this moment of appropriation, the word does not exist in a neutral and impersonal language (it is not, after all, out of a dictionary that the speaker gets his word!), but rather it exists in other people's mouths, in other people's contexts, serving other people's intentions: it is from there that one must take the word, and make it one's own. (p. 293)

For Bakhtin, any utterance should be understood in terms of this necessary ever-present tension between someone else's and one's own. Bakhtin's perception that language lies on the borderline between oneself and the other point to another important aspect of appropriation - namely, it always involves resistance of some sort. To quote Bakhtin (1981) again:

And not all words for just anyone submit equally easily to this appropriation, to this seizure and transformation into private property: many words stubbornly resist, others remain alien, sound foreign in the mouth of the one who appropriated them and who now speaks them; they cannot be assimilated into his context and fall out of it; it is as if they put themselves in quotation marks against the will of the speaker. Language is not a neutral medium that passes freely and easily into the private property of the speaker's intentions; it is populated - overpopulated - with the intention of others. Expropriating it, forcing it to submit to one's own intentions and accents, is a difficult and complicated process. (p. 294)

Bakhtin's point was that utterances are often not easily and smoothly appropriated by speakers or writers. Instead, there is often resistance and some form of such resistance is the rule rather than the exception. Therefore, Bakhtin's notion of appropriation is a potentially powerful way to conceptualize the complex process student writers experience in making others' words their own. It has been particularly insightful to those interested in reading students' texts as filled with conflicts and new possibilities rather than simply dismissing these as ambiguous or incoherent.

For example, Welch (1993) saw a student's text as a site of dialogic tension where his or her own words would be shot through a polyphony of other viewpoints, nuances, contexts, and intentions, emphasizing that it is by orchestrating that polyphony that the writer makes meaning heard. To investigate how we can read students' writing as dialogic interplay and orchestration, she focused on Linda, a student writer from a first-year composition class whose draft "reverberates with noisy, contentious voices" (p. 497).

While Linda's writing teacher simply saw the text in need of improvement, the author attempted to recognize the multiple perspectives and multiple messages a single text communicates through the collision of private and public voices. She identified voices in the student's text that seemed not yet to serve her intentions and that may thus keep a reader from constructing a single consistent, coherent meaning. Rather than viewing those voices as matters of form in need of correction, Welch advised us to view these moments as "a necessary step in the complicated process of making the word one's own" (p. 497).

Recchio (1991) echoed Welch's theme, but specifically focused on helping students recognize the diverse modes of discourse they bring with them into the classroom and the new modes of discourse they encounter there. To this end, teachers, he suggested, can approach students' texts "with an eye toward locating the multiple competing discourses manifest in each student paper" (p. 447). A student's paper from a first-semester composition course written in response to the reading of Freud's argument on taboo was analyzed to illustrate how diverse modes of discourse intersect in one paper. The author identified at least four modes of discourse co-existing in the text with varying degrees of appropriation and resistance. Recchio proposed that the point of distinguishing among the different modes of discourse in the paper is not to ask the student to make a choice among them. Rather, it is to bring to the student's consciousness the complexity of her response to the topic, as evidenced by "the layers of language that emerge in the writing" (p. 450).

Dillon (1988) also used Bakhtin's concept of appropriation to explore traditional conventions of quotation or documentation in academic discourse. Dillon maintained that "perverted commas" identify "exact sites where the word merges, recoils, and intersects with the words of others" (p. 68). The author brought the discussion of perverted commas round to the situation of the student writer. In response to teachers' concern about the student writer's overuse of others' words, as evidenced by her colleague's confession that she wanted to "put perverted commas around large chunks of some freshmen papers – sometimes entire papers," the author posited that the collision of voices is always

involved in finding one's own voice. Dillon suggested that finding one's voice is "not just an emptying and purifying oneself of others' words, of the perverted commas, but also an admitting, an adopting, an embracing of filiations, communities, and discourses" (p. 71).

### Internally Persuasive Discourse: How to Respond to Student Writing

Bakhtin has also shed some important light on the area of how best to respond to student writing. Bakhtin offered a particularly rich construct for the analysis of teacher response or commentary in terms of how power and authority are negotiated in dialogic textual spaces. One of the places where Bakhtin dealt with issues of power and authority is in his account of "authoritative," as opposed to "internally persuasive," discourse (1981, pp. 342-348). In his account, "the authoritative word (religious, political, moral, the word of a father, of adults, of teachers, etc.). . . demands that we acknowledge it, that we make it our own, it binds us, quite independent of any power it might have to persuade us internally" (p. 342). In such cases, the kinds of appropriation available are bipolar: "One must either totally affirm [the authoritative word], or totally reject it" (p. 343). Bakhtin's discussion of internally persuasive discourse, on the other hand, maintains a closer relationship with his fundamental theory of language as dialogic. Instead of either totally accepting or totally rejecting the words of another, we are encouraged to engage in a kind of dialogue with what others say because "the internally persuasive word is half-ours and half-someone else's" (p. 345).

Bakhtin's notion of internally persuasive discourse as inviting free contact and negotiation of authority has informed many composition researchers that this dialogic engagement should be a starting point for a response that may incorporate and change the form and meaning of what was originally said. For example, Prior (1995b) presented a contextualized analysis of a series of textual exchanges (text-response-revision) in which a graduate student and her professor intensely engaged as the student produced multiple drafts of a conference paper. Drawing on Bakhtin's notion of internally persuasive discourse, Prior attempted to show how response and revision are dialogically shaped

through the textual exchanges. Prior directed our attention to textual spaces where various verbal and ideological points of view, approaches, directions, and values clash and this collision of differences exerts an influence on both the professor and the student. "The central nexus of the student's resistance", he noted, "is also an area where we see signs of influence on the professor" (p. 320). Prior emphasized the importance of reciprocal interactions between the interlocutors whose meanings are negotiated in and around texts over time, arguing for incorporating more internally persuasive discourse that promotes contact and dialogue into our response to student writing.

Bakhtin's idea of how authoritative discourse presupposes and enforces a kind of distance whereas internally persuasive discourse encourages dialogue was also appropriated by Welch (1998) who attempted to redefine what happens in the margins through a practice called "sideshadowing." As opposed to the much more common narrative device of foreshadowing, which posits a predetermined future, sideshadowing, she explained, "redirects our attention to the present moment, its multiple conflicts, its multiple possibilities" (p. 377). To illustrate how sideshadowing works as teacher response technique, Welch presented her student's draft in which the student writes his marginal comments, brackets, and arrows from his own reading of the draft. In this practice, the student writes and he begins to work out multiple readings of what he has written. When the teacher sits down with the student's draft, she also encounters the student's reading of the draft. Then she can enter into and situate her responses within multiple readings that have already begun. To Welch, the student's glosses open up other possible readings, other ways to consider the draft's present reality and the potential futures that might be found.

Welch's warning against defining a monolithic reality for the student's text parallels Mirskin's (1995) concern with writing and responding as a process of valuing. Mirskin was interested in how a description of the writing process in terms of value might inform classroom practice, especially in terms of the kinds of comments teachers provide students in response to their writing and revision. Following Bakhtin, Mirskin sees the word live in a "dialogically agitated and tension-filled environment of alien

words, value judgments and accents” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 276). Translating Bakhtin's words into her conceptualization of teacher response in the direction of value, the author suggested that “the extent to which writers and readers are sharing and supporting one another's processes and contexts of value” become a critical factor in teacher-student textual interaction (p. 402). Analyzing a student's work over a semester of writing, Mirskin highlighted a finding that the student consistently avoided revising her papers in response to feedback from her peers and instructor that failed to understand the way in which she was valuing her subject. She concluded that teachers need to understand students' writing as representing their perception of what is significant to them in the world, basing their responses on the very understanding of the writer's process of valuing.

#### Ideological Becoming: How to Facilitate Alterity

Notions of intersubjectivity and alterity in analyses of intermental functioning have been a major research inquiry especially in developmental and educational psychology. According to Wertsch (1998), intersubjectivity, which concerns the degree to which interlocutors in a communicative situation share a perspective, has been recently subjected to critiques calling for greater attention to be paid to alterity. At the heart of the critiques is the awareness that the research focusing only on intersubjectivity is missing some essential aspects of interaction and change. As Matusov (1996) argued, a single-minded focus on intersubjectivity, may "limit researchers to study only consensus-oriented activities and to focus on processes of unification of the participants' subjectivities" (p. 26). Seen from a Bakhtinian perspective, alterity plays an equally important role in intermental functioning. In contrast to the univocal function, which tends toward a single, shared, homogeneous perspective comprising intersubjectivity, the function of alterity tends toward dialogism, conflict among voices, and new understanding and learning. In line with the recent research in developmental and educational psychology that focuses on conflict and change in intermental functioning, a growing body of research in composition studies has used Bakhtin's concept of alterity.

Ritchie (1989), for example, characterizes writing workshop as an alternative learning environment that accommodates multiple, conflicting voices and creates the potential for tension and growth. Drawing examples from an introductory composition class in which she was a participant-observer, she identified several factors that constitute the heightened heteroglossia in the writing workshop. The factors include the unique histories students brought to the writing class, assumptions about the conventions of “school writing,” the students’ own emerging writing, produced in the collaborative environment of the class, and students’ responses to the writing of their peers and the values implied by those responses. The author suggested that writing workshop with all of these factors intermingled not only offers students an array of possibilities from which to work toward constructing their ideas and their identities, but also offers the potential for struggle. However, the struggle is considered important to the student. Ritchie suggested that the struggle through which change occurred in students’ writing, in their conversations about writing, and in their thinking are far more important than practicing a set of predetermined academic conventions.

Cooper and Selfe (1990) shared Ritchie's position that the simultaneity of diverse voices and the struggle between them is an important context for learning and growth. They explored the use of another particular kind of forum, computer conferencing, as a potential place for Bakhtinian alterity. In participating in a series of on-line discussions, as they reported, students have the opportunity to examine differences between what they say and think and what others say and think, between what they should believe and what they do believe, between what matters to them and what does not matter to them. And in reading, comparing, and responding to the various discourses of their classmates and their teacher, they move toward what Bakhtin (1981) called “ideological becoming,” defined as “the process of selectively assimilating the words of others” (p. 341). Necessary to this process of ideological becoming, they explained, is the student's ability to “discriminate among discourses that have different claims on it” (p. 858). In Cooper and Selfe's view, computer conferences offer a place for alterity because students have a chance to engage



in discussions where the discourses come into conflict and to learn to evaluate for themselves which discourses seem to make sense of their own experiences of the world.

Ideological becoming is encouraged not only in alternative learning environments such as writing workshops or computer conferences, but also in particular learning/teaching approaches. One is what Cooper (1994) called “dialogic learning.” A dialogic model of language and learning suggests a more responsive and open relationship between a discourse and all its users. Following Bakhtin who postulated two conflicting forces of unification and diversification as animating every speech act, Cooper recommended that teachers design writing instruction that should not only acquaint students with the conventions of academic discourse but should also celebrate the diverse perspectives that students bring to classes as productive resources of knowledge. To Cooper, dialogic learning makes such coordination possible, since in dialogic learning “people work together to create useful knowledge rather than relying solely on authorities to provide the truth” (p. 545).

Similarly, Qualley and Chiseri-Strater (1994) suggested collaboration as having the potential of accommodating diverse voices and enabling students' ideological becoming. In a series of collaborative inquiry projects, the authors asked students to compose reflective memos to each other in addition to keeping a personal journal while composing essays on their common topic. They found that difference becomes the basis for further dialogue and reflexivity. In each case of collaborative inquiry the authors have observed, the students do not reach neat and tidy answers, but they do develop new perspectives and questions that might be used for further inquiry. Qualley and Chiseri-Strater suggested that collaborative inquiry generates “difficult questions, doubts, and recriminations” and yet still contains the promise of new insight and transformation (p. 128). A student who participated in one of the projects noted: “If I have learned anything, it's that there is reality in confusion and myth in certainty” (p. 120). And that realization, as Qualley and Chiseri-Strater argued, is a very important developmental landmark for students who are in the constant process of becoming.

### Resistant Pedagogies: Rethinking Genres and Academic Discourse

Bakhtin's philosophy of language as dialogic, heteroglossic, and carnivalesque is also evident in his discussion of genres that are embedded in and develop out of the various spheres of human activity. In conceptualizing speech genre, Bakhtin, on the one hand, included instances in which utterances are relatively tightly constrained with regard to form and content, items such as prayers and “various everyday genres of greetings, farewells, congratulations, all kinds of wishes, information about health, business and so on” (1986, p. 79). On the other hand, he included the “freer and more creative genres of oral speech communication” (p. 80) that do not involve such tight constraints on the form and content of utterances. In all cases, genres were seen as the place where struggles between centripetal force directed toward conformity and centrifugal force aimed at resistance are orchestrated in the inexhaustible human activity. As Bakhtin has shown us, genres are shaped by dialogic interactions among multiple forces in conflict, and special emphasis should be placed on the extreme heterogeneity of speech genres. Seen from this perspective, writing pedagogy, if it is to respond sufficiently to the heteroglossic nature of genres, should be resistant enough to work toward “solving the problems of the dynamic and interpenetrating relations among discourses, the individual, and the social” (Russell, 1997, p. 506).

Spellmeyer (1989) used Bakhtin in arguing against discipline-specific writing instruction, where conformity and submission to conventions govern discourse production while failing to recognize heteroglossia in any discourse communities. In support of resistant pedagogies, he argued that student writers cannot become accomplished by ignoring their situatedness in an intersection of “socio-ideological contradictions between the present and the past, between different epochs of the past, and between different socio-ideological groups in the present” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 291). He further argued that the traditional pedagogy of community conventions that characterize each discourse essentially monologic prevents novice writers from discovering their own potential contribution to enacting change to the community they belong to. Spellmyer

then suggests that any good pedagogy should take into consideration the dialogic interaction between community conventions and individual writer.

Schuster (1985) attempted to provide another “resistant” pedagogical framework for academic writing that “serves as an antidote to a simplified, exclusive concern with purely formal aspects of writing instruction” by redefining style and aesthetics of writing from a Bakhtinian perspective (p. 595). The author suggested that Bakhtin's view of language as dialogic compels us to challenge the traditional concept of style and aesthetics as separable from language itself. Instead, Schuster saw style such as sarcasm, parody, and irony emerging from the interpretive richness of discourse. That is, style develops through association with other accents and intonations that can enter into language from other speakers and writers. As for aesthetic concerns in language, Schuster found that sophisticated language use is closely related to multiple orientations and interpretations. In drawing a pedagogical framework, Schuster recommended that we resist our popular tendency to understand everything “through rigid definition and concrete specification” (p. 603).

Elbow (1991) directed our attention to the need for incorporating nonacademic discourse as well as academic discourse in our teaching writing. He argued against the notion that our students should necessarily be working towards the mastery of some particular, well-defined sort of discourse. Elbow assumed that “learning new intellectual practices is not just a matter of practicing them; it is also a matter of thinking and talking about one's practice” (p. 149). In order to use writing as thinking device, students need to work on nonacademic practices and tasks, such as on discourse that “renders” as well as being acquainted with academic discourses that “explains” (p. 148). Elbow further argued that students might need some time to attend to the stylistic conventions or voices of academic discourse, but only as part of a larger exploration of various voices and styles.

Seen from this review of the L1 literature, Bakhtin's consuming interest in any human activity including the use of language as dialogic, heteroglossic, and subject to change and transformation has received widespread comment among researchers in composition studies. Judging from the recent interest in Bakhtin's philosophy of language

and the upsurge of articles that evoked his concepts, it does appear that Bakhtin has been extensively studied by many composition researchers. Curiously, however, Bakhtin's constructs, rich and evocative descriptions of discourse acquisition and use, have seldom been used to describe CMC activities that are being increasingly incorporated as disciplinary writing in many educational settings.

## **Review of the L2 Literature**

It would be unfair to claim that the applicability of Bakhtin's ideas to L2 writing theory and research has gone unnoticed. There is a small but growing body of research that uses Bakhtin as a major theoretical framework. The four studies that will be presented here, all consistent with Bakhtin's position and its related literature in the L1 composition studies, raise serious questions about the nature of L2 writing and teaching.

Casanave (1995), in an essay, "Local interactions: Constructing contexts for composing in a graduate sociology program," argued against simplistic characterizations of academic socialization. Rejecting the traditional conceptualization of the initiation into a discourse community as monolithic and unidirectional, Casanave suggested that to understand how students are socialized in their degree programs as disciplinary writers, one should consider the immediate, local, and interactive factors that influence individual students as they write. Drawing on Bakhtin's idea that utterances are linked to their concrete situation, she argued that the same can be said of the writing that students do as part of their disciplinary socialization. Rather than being monolithically immersed in the community, student writers, she noted, using a multiplicity of local resources including interactions with their teachers and their fellow students, training they receive, and writing tasks they are assigned, respond to their socialization into the academic community in diverse ways. She found that they not only take in established aspects of the community, but they push back and resist. Successful socialization, Casanave argued, lies in the students' capability to perceive themselves as having power to "resist, push

back, toy, experiment, and, if necessary, continue looking,” not just pushing themselves to adopt the conventions of the community (p. 108).

Like Casanave, Prior (1995a) also recommended that L2 writing researchers take a much more contextual look at academic discourse than they have previously. He specifically focused on redefining writing tasks as speech genres. Following Bakhtin, he saw academic writing tasks as complexly shaped by the multiple histories, activities, and goals that participants bring to and create within the community. In observing graduate seminars and analyzing the data through the sociohistorical lens of speech genres, the author admitted that he faced dilemma. A common assumption that genres must have a fixed structure and recognizable style continued to operate in his consciousness and prevented him from seeing genres as patterns of situated activity rather than fixed unity. For Prior, it is important to understand academic discourse and academic environments as complex unfolding events rather than closed systems. He argued that such understanding leads to a pedagogical approach: “We cannot simply specify and teach academic writing tasks” (p. 77).

In another study, Pennycook (1996) dealt with textual borrowing, or plagiarism L2 writers often make, using Bakhtin’s idea that “our speech, that is, all our utterances are filled with others’ words” (1986, p. 89). Working with L2 learners of English studying in China and in Hong Kong, he raised profound questions about how we consider the notion of textual borrowing or plagiarism. His informal interviews with Hong Kong Chinese students who had been “caught” plagiarizing revealed that there are several factors involved that defy a single explanation for the common practice. He noted that students come to the class not only with different cultural and educational backgrounds but also with different understandings of texts, language, and learning. They are also confronted by a range of more local concerns such as particular assignments that requires memorization. Pennycook concluded that if we admit that learning is shaped by multiple factors and all language learning involves a process of appropriating others’ words, we should not be so “dogmatic about where we draw boundaries between acceptable or unacceptable textual borrowing” (p. 227).

Bakhtin's underlying assumption that heterogeneity and variability are not only possible but exist in all languages is also incorporated by Lu (1994) who focused on the pedagogical issue of how to use the writing classroom as what Pratt (1991) calls “contact zone,” a site of struggle among conflicting discourses with unequal socio-political power (p. 444). Lu was particularly interested in explicitly foregrounding the Bakhtinian concept of “resistance” and “change” when helping students to conceptualize the processes of producing and interpreting an idiosyncratic style in students' own writings. In her classroom, she asked the students to explore the full range of choices and options, including those excluded by the conventions of academic writing. Working with the tension between official and alternative discursive codes, Lu's students were shown to broaden their sense of the range of options and choices they can afford in writing an academic paper.

### **Situating My Study within Bakhtin-based Composition Studies**

Given the broad scope of Bakhtinian concepts of language, it is not surprising that Bakhtin has been extremely influential in discussing a wide range of research subjects and theoretical approaches in recent composition studies. However, there are some areas in which the potential of Bakhtinian perspective has not been explored to its fullest extent. One such important area that needs more probing is Bakhtin's dialogism. As Wertsch (1991) suggested, there are two ways in which human mental functioning or learning might be socially situated. First, such functioning may be carried out through the social interaction found in dyads or other small groups. Second, learning can be viewed as being ideologically situated in social institutional and cultural settings. It might be safe to claim that the first aspect of social situatedness, which can be examined by teacher-learner interaction, learner-learner interaction, or some combination of these, has been vigorously sought in L1 and L2 writing research. However, the second aspect of social situatedness deserves further exploration. Wertsch hinted at some productive future research directions by arguing that it is the notion of a social language as dialogic that serves to link the sociocultural setting with individual mental functioning. In this respect,

Casanave (1995) and Prior (1995a) have provided the necessary groundwork for such inquiry by looking at the contextual factors that might influence the dialogic formation of writing activities. Following this line of socio-culturally or socio-historically oriented research, my study attempted to reveal the dynamic and complex processes involved in the socialization of L1 and L2 writers into the discourse communities as well as in shaping academic discourse and writing in a CMC environment.

Secondly, Bakhtin's heteroglossia will also add to a growing body of research that concerns the issue of what constitutes an “animated” utterance. As more and more writing researchers and teachers are informed by a Bakhtinian view of language as a site of struggle among conflicting discourses, there seems to be an increasing attention paid to writers' success at what Bakhtin saw as dialogically orchestrating a varied and profound heteroglossia. Bakhtin understood discourse, spoken or written as “the product of a complex social situation” in which real or imagined audiences, earlier and later utterances, various speech styles, and a variety of other complex social factors shape all utterances from the outset (Morson, 1986, p. 83). If that is the case, it follows that we inevitably encounter “hybrid constructions of heteroglossia” in any good text we read (Edlund, 1988, p. 57). In many cases, student writers are confronted by the multiple voices that may not be entirely under their coordination and thus texts produced in moments of the multiple voices in conflict are likely to appear fragmented and contradictory. Edlund (1988), for example, in analyzing L2 writers' texts, agreed that L2 writers often resist alien words before they fully appropriate them, but that the initial resistance is the proper first response to any alien word that might later result in a critical attitude and true argumentative power. In this regard, my study attempts to look at students' CMC texts with an eye toward identifying multiple voices in conflict and uncovering the students' appropriation processes to make others' words their own.

Finally, Bakhtin's concept of carnival is the area that I believe has been least explored in the writing studies. One of the most compelling pedagogical issues in education might be about how to create a classroom as a place for productive and meaningful learning. Bakhtin's idea of carnival as a site of transformation and renewal

seems to be very consistent with the current interest in seeing difference as well as consensus as the basis for learning. Lensmire (1994), in reflecting on writing workshops as alternative learning environment, emphasized four features of Bakhtin's carnival. The first is the participation of all in carnival. Carnival is not a spectacle, not something performed by some and watched by others. Instead, the line between spectator and performer is blurred. A second feature of carnival is free and familiar contact among people. In the carnival, physical and social distances between people are suspended and thus constrained, coercive relations give way to ones based on freedom and equality. Thirdly, the carnival is filled with gay and free activities with objects and concepts, through which to dispel the atmosphere of gloomy and false seriousness surrounding the world and all its phenomena. The fourth feature is what Bakhtin (1984) called “carnival abuse” (p. 213), which is expressed in the loud blasphemies, obscenities, and parodies that sound in the carnival square. Bakhtin emphasized that carnival abuse is not personal invective aimed at other individuals. Instead, it is directed at traditional authority and its “old truth” (p. 213). The four carnival features of active participation, free and familiar contact among people, a playful relation to the world, and carnival abuse that Lensmire identified as characteristics of writing workshops may also be observed in a CMC context. Surprisingly, however, few composition researchers have explored CMC as a place for the Bakhtinian carnival. My study, by examining utterances produced in online discussions, attempts to reveal how learning can be facilitated not only through consensus but also through clash of voices in a carnivalesque, new learning environment.

### **Computer-Mediated Communication**

In this study, drawing on Bakhtin's constructs, I pursue and attempt to describe CMC texts created when students and their teacher in a particular graduate course on psycholinguistics strive for a new level of understanding by engaging in an asynchronous CMC activity, in which utterances from participants bounce off each other, sparking new insights and perspectives. In this section, I will review studies on CMC that are relevant



to my research inquiry. I will first describe the uses of CMC in classroom settings by reviewing studies that have examined how classroom discourse has been transformed (or constrained) as a result of interacting with people on the computers and how learning has been redefined by this advancement. Then I will delineate what previous research has uncovered about the nature of CMC discourse that has brought about such changes. I will conclude this section by discussing what aspects of CMC discourse has not been robustly examined in the previous literature, thereby situating my study within a recent research paradigm that suggests CMC discourse should be viewed at the crossroads of contexts, interactions, and texts.

### **Uses of CMC in Classroom Settings**

There is a trend on college campuses towards making communication technologies an intrinsic part of traditional face-to-face courses to provide students with more opportunities to interact with instructors and peers (Harasim, 1987; Kang, 1998). The drive behind computers in education is felt by everyone who has witnessed the rapid penetration of technology into classroom settings and who suddenly find themselves adding computer conferencing systems to their repertoire of “ways of talking” in the classroom. As CMC has been widely used to support instruction, rigorous inquiry into the impact of CMC on the educational processes has begun. Much of the research on uses of CMC in educational settings during the last decade or so has focused on its potential benefits in terms of how it can alter traditional power structures in the classroom and enhance learning opportunities for students.

### **Supporting Alternative Power Structures in CMC**

Among the consistently cited impact of CMC on our educational system is the altered power and authority distribution it offers in contrast to conventional educational settings (Bump, 1990; Cooper & Selfe, 1990; Faigley, 1992; John, 1998; Kamhi-Stein,

2000). The literature has almost unanimously reported a shift in authority from teacher to student, suggesting that CMC serves as an equalizer of participant structures. Faigley (1992), for example, illustrated how computers can deconstruct a tightly controlled classroom discourse. He noted that as the teacher often relinquishes control of the floor to the students, the traditional classroom discourse of initiation, reply, and evaluation (IRE) is overthrown in a linguistic coup d'état by written computer conversation. Likewise, Kamhi-Stein (2000), investigating students' participation in whole-class, face-to-face discussions and in Web-based bulletin board discussions in a TESOL preparation course, reported that CMC promoted participatory structures among students. She noted that while exchanges in face-to-face discussions reflected the IRE structure, interaction patterns in CMC deviated from such structure; instead, many of the exchanges consisted of students' initiations and responses, and seemed driven by the needs and interests of the students. She further argued that with a decrease in the instructor's participation, CMC allowed students to interact with their peers and, in the process of interaction, to play complementary roles: Sometimes they provided assistance and gave feedback; sometimes they received guidance and support.

The more equal participation pattern in CMC as opposed to traditional classroom discussions may be attributed partly to the reduction of context cues in CMC (Warschauer, Turbee, & Roberts, 1996) and partly to the absence of oral interaction constraints such as the fear of interrupting or of being interrupted and the pressure for a quick response (Beauvois, 1995). Ideally, because computer conferencing is a written form of communication, students do not compete for the floor and can say as much as they like without interruption. This may be especially relevant to international students whose native language is not English (Kamhi-Stein 2000; McGinnis, 1996). Freiermuth (2001) noted that L2 learners in online interactions with native speakers feel more comfortable contributing and are less concerned about any language deficiencies that might cause them to refrain from speaking in a face-to-face setting. For example, L2 learners need not be concerned with pronunciation issues, which often require a high degree of attention and monitoring in the oral mode and may inhibit efforts at oral

communication in the target language. Thus, interactants in CMC are less affected by wait time, turn-taking, and other elements of traditional interaction, enabling students to participate as much as they want, whenever they want, with opportunities for contribution being more equally distributed among participants.

John (1998), focusing on this democratic nature of computer conferencing in classrooms, examined graduate students' online interactions and found that students were able to master the medium and act as responsible, equal partners. Physical characteristics such as the removal of time and place allowed students to tailor class participation to fit within their lives and locations. As a result, all voices were given equal opportunity to contribute to class discussion, and a community of learners was formed that was unique to many of the participants' educational experiences. John's findings suggest that CMC can allow for greater democracy in the availability and practice of education.

Closely related to promoting democracy in the classroom, CMC was also claimed to have significant characteristics that can assist in the process of conflict mediation. In a study of the use of computer conferencing with preservice history teachers based in Northern Ireland, Austin (1997) reported that CMC allowed for the entire class to make their views known, irrespective of their accent, verbal confidence, or relationship with their teacher. He argued that the expression of these views through computer conferencing makes the individual's values and assumptions explicit, a necessary part of the process of identifying where common ground exists and where there are real differences, serving as a vehicle for conflict mediation.

In addition, the democratic nature of CMC allows individuals to construct an online identity that is not necessarily identical to one's presence in real life. For example, Moran and Hawisher (1998) reported on a study in which teachers' identities differed substantially from the identities they projected in the physical classroom, suggesting that "these teachers were able to use their e-mail teaching space to express different and complementary aspects of themselves, thereby enhancing their effectiveness as teachers" (p. 93). Students can also express aspects of their personalities that might not be revealed in class. As Turkle (1995) argued, assuming other personas is one way the freedom of the

Internet allows individuals to pursue different aspects of their personalities. Lam (2000) investigated how L2 learner's identities are constructed through networked media. Lam presented an account of "textual identity" of one Chinese teenager in the networked computer media, highlighting the finding that while classroom English appeared to contribute to his sense of exclusion, the English he controlled on the Internet enabled him to develop a sense of belonging and connectedness to a global English-speaking community. Although this type of example may not be very common, it demonstrates how CMC can be a semi-private area where students can discuss their own ideas and problems without the pressure of being scrutinized by their teachers or other authorities, as well as a means to establish and maintain social and personal relationships that may be different from those in face-to-face contexts.

Seen from the literature described above, CMC has the potential to allow all voices in the class to be heard, allow the students to identify where common ground exists and where there are real differences among themselves, and allow them to negotiate their multiple identities in a new environment. However, there is evidence to counter this view of CMC as democratic and liberating. In an important work on power, status, and CMC, Spears and Lea (1994) applied Foucault's metaphor of the panopticon, Jeremy Bentham's prison design that isolates prisoners from one another and provides for the possibility of constant surveillance, without the jailor being seen by the prisoners, to an analysis of electronic communication. This metaphor vividly evokes a counterpoint to some of the optimistic claims about CMC described above and seems to be useful for explaining some negative student views. Students' hesitation to post, because it leaves a permanent written record, for example, makes sense in this light. By writing, they may make themselves vulnerable to criticism from their peers as well as instructors.

At the same time, scholars have increasingly begun to explore the ways CMC discourse may replicate or amplify racial, gender, and other inequities that can affect traditional face-to-face classroom discussions. For example, Romano (1993) described the ways students in her undergraduate writing course negotiated racial, ethnic, and gender identity in online discussions and concluded that "new technology cannot entirely

dismantle old habits” (p. 21). Sujo, Oral, and Willis (2002) studied a graduate-level bilingual education course in which students of various ethnic backgrounds (15 Hispanics, 9 Anglos, and 1 Navajo) were involved in asynchronous bulletin board discussions. Applying theoretical frames of constructivism, symbolic interactionism, and critical theory, the researchers revealed issues of power and racism in student communications. By highlighting the events in which the students disagreed on differing views of power, ethnicity, and identity between majority and minority students, the authors noted that students at the margin become disadvantaged because the characteristics of dominant culture are often amplified even in the online environment. Based on these findings, they concluded that the challenge in using CMC in educational settings is to “recognize and act upon the knowledge that computers are not neutral but amplify the cultural characteristics that are taken for granted by those who develop them, promote them, and use them” (p. 268).

### Enhancing Learning Opportunities in CMC

Another major impact on our educational system is how CMC has redefined what is meant by reading, writing, discussion, and learning. Because CMC is based on the exchange of written messages that are permanently available to all participants in the class, the composition of text is the basic form of communication available in CMC environment. There is much discussion about the relationship of writing to learning in CMC (Kaye, 1989; Robertson, 2000). Having the text of the discourse available at any time for all participants provides both teacher and students the means for “weaving together the ideas and information from many people’s minds regardless of when and from where they contribute” (Kaye, 1989, p. 3). Marsden (1996) noted that, in the process of writing, thinking becomes “clearer, more coherent and rigorous” (p. 244). Similarly, the work of Andrusyszyn and Davie (1997) on reflective journal writing in computer conferences suggests that the process helps learners “develop meta-cognitive awareness” (p. 121). Sherry (1998) also proposed that students who actively participate in

CMC activities are practicing higher-order thinking skills. She further asserted that those who “lurk” or read the messages of others without writing do learn, although they may not receive the same level of benefits. Even for those students who initially resisted an opportunity for learning online, the written medium of computer conferencing provides a place for eventual development in their path onto academic life. Wegerif (1998)

illustrated this with the comments of Judy, a student in an online course:

I began this course disliking writing and I finish this course a better communicator by text. I have always preferred communicating orally and face to face. This course has shown me it is possible to communicate via text, and that writing can be enjoyable (III Method-A).

In the asynchronous environment, there is quite general agreement among students regarding the following positive aspects of asynchronous CMC (Berge, 1995; Burge, 1994; Chong, 1998): 1) Learners are able to read and write messages at any time from anywhere; 2) The asynchronous or delayed capabilities of CMC allows students to consider thoughtfully how to respond to previous messages and how to initiate new ideas for further deliberation by the class; and 3) CMC provides a permanent record of one's thoughts for later student reflection and debate.

The ability of learners to compose and revise messages when they have adequate time means that additional resources can be added that could not be accessed in a face-to-face setting. The opportunity to re-read and reflect in CMC encourages the student to become clearer about what they are writing. At the same time, messages tend to be relational; the writer is addressing comments to other people with whom he/she is in regular contact, the whole class or subgroup within the class. Therefore, in composing a message, the sensitivities that have been previously expressed by other members are considered and the history of the dialogue becomes an important part of the thinking in the composing process (Robertson, 2000; Wegerif, 1998). With these characteristics, asynchronous technology “facilitates self-pacing and self-directed learning” (Benbunan-Fich & Hiltz, 1999, p. 411), promotes students' reflection on course content, and encourages students to take responsibility for their own learning (Chong, 1998; Lamy & Goodfellow, 1999).

Despite these clear advantages, using asynchronous communication for learning may leave students with some frustrations that may be related to its asynchronicity. For example, the removal of time constraints can cause an overload both for instructors and students with ceaseless opportunities to read and write. In addition, the lack of visual communication cues can be a significant disadvantage of CMC (Kuehn, 1994). Many studies have reported that students feel isolated, lack immediate feedback, have difficulty making decisions for group assignments (Benbunan-Fich & Hiltz, 1999; Wegerif, 1998). Other frustrations result from inadequate technical skills and lack of technical support for students registered in online courses (Carr-Chellman, Dyer, & Breman, 2000).

In her exploration of the interactional limitations of CMC, Herring (1999) suggested that in spite of the interactional difficulties, CMC continues to be popular for educational purposes. She noted that participants develop accommodations such as quoting the key thoughts expressed in previous messages to tie the dialogue together and provide the coherence that would otherwise be missing. She went on to suggest that in fact some participants prefer this form of interaction because the messages are persistent, thus permitting thoughtful reflection and the ability to go back and clarify what was actually said. Following this line of reasoning, there is considerable discussion in the literature concerning the desirability of asynchronous exchange for course-related learning. King (2001) noted the depth of the discussions, citing the extra time students had to reflect and reply, and provided evidence that the students noticed this as well. Nunan (1999) found that students in CMC made frequent connections between the things they were learning in the course and their real-life situations and that opportunities to interact in CMC provided students with a sense of belonging to a community of scholars and learners.

Viewing CMC use through a lens of literacy as a social or cultural practice, de Pourbaix (2000) examined the emergent literacy practices of a group of international students at a Canadian university, and found that specific practices were adopted by this community of learners. She related these practices to the concepts of academic literacy, computer literacy, and information literacy. Lea (2001) explored how computer

conferencing can give students the opportunity to rehearse discipline-based debates and then exploit these as rhetorical resources in their written work. Focusing on the different types of textual data and exploring the relationships between the texts of the computer conferences and the texts of students' written assignments, she found that asynchronous CMC enables a reflexivity in student learning, allowing students to benefit from the learning of their peers online and to draw upon this in the construction of their own individual disciplinary knowledge, as explicated in their own written argument. In their individual written work, the students used the voices of their peers in ways traditionally reserved for authoritative published authors.

Yagelski (2000), working with preservice English teachers, explored ways in which computer technologies can be employed in the ongoing effort to transform practices in English classrooms. By engaging in weekly asynchronous "commentaries" in which students were to explore issues relevant to the course, pose questions, identify problems, and share their thought and insights with the guide of a teacher who was committed to helping them develop a critical stance toward literacy, Yagelski could show that students were afforded new opportunities to examine pedagogies and consider new ways of addressing the problems confronted in teaching. He suggested that students begin to see literacy as a potentially transformative activity in a CMC context by challenging their pre-perceived ways of thinking about literacy and exploring new ways to understand what it means to read and write. My investigation of asynchronous CMC as a focal speech activity is encouraged by this recognition of the learning depth possible in this interactive, social, and technological context as well as its potential to transform literacy practices in the classroom.

### **Research on the Nature of CMC Discourse**

As the review of the literature on the impact of CMC in educational settings, text-based CMC makes possible the implementation of social constructivist pedagogies: putting students of different backgrounds in direct communicative contact with one another, and distributing the printed transcript of their online interaction as data for later



written work, brings students' thinking and writing into the classroom as legitimate knowledge. Considering how difficult it is to foster student-led discussion in classrooms, the findings on the potential benefits of CMC in terms of bringing about changes in power structures and knowledge construction are certainly powerful despite the noted counter-claims. Given that the teacher's presence in CMC is less powerful and less directing, given that there is a more powerful part of student participation in CMC, given that it promotes thoughtful reflection and deep learning, what is this discourse about?

Scholarly works from a variety of fields such as linguistics, composition and literacy, classroom discourse analysis, and distance education have addressed this issue. In this section, I explore the findings and conclusions of studies on the discourse of CMC in an attempt to construct meaning about this new form of discourse and to identify areas of further study in this direction. Two lines of research have been vigorously investigated, focusing on 1) whether the language of CMC is similar to speech or writing; and 2) what interaction patterns CMC promotes. As can be seen from the literature that follows, previous research rarely describes the nature of utterances in CMC as they are situated in a particular sociocultural context.

### Research on the Language of CMC

Does CMC possess characteristics that distinguish it from other forms of discourse? Is the language of CMC different from spoken language or written language? If so, how? Such consensus as exists today suggests that the communication is indeed neither simply speech-like nor simply written-like but is its own language. CMC was described by Ferrara, Brunner, and Whittemore (1991) as an emergent linguistic register. In a study that examined syntactic and stylistic dimensions of CMC, the authors asserted that CMC is an emerging hybrid variety of language; that it displays features of both oral and written language; that it may be the first type of language use to be studied that is both edited and interactive; that it is an emergent language variety learned by the

participants in an unplanned, untaught manner; and that it is a historically unique juxtaposition of text format with interaction pressures.

Murray (1991) added much to the Ferrara et al. analysis of written conversation by focusing on the composing process of CMC. Murray asserted that the writing process for computer conversation involves planning, translating, and reviewing; however, all the processes interact and are motivated by the current state of knowledge created interactively by the participants. Murray also found that computer conversationalists create a new mode of discourse, one that is most appropriate for particular tasks and topics. Thus, writing, as produced in a computer environment, is another indication that it is both constituted and constitutive of our social world. In her view, writing in this environment is both a cognitive and a social activity. Like Ferrara et al., Murray found that computer conversation displays features of both oral and written discourse. On the one hand, computer conversations often display speech-like interpersonal involvement using active voice, personal pronouns, emotive diction, hedging and vagueness, paralinguistic cues and direct quotations. On the other hand, computer conversations display writing-like detachment by use of the more formal pronoun “one” and the use of highly technical language and definiteness.

Wilkins (1991) also viewed computer conversation as an opportunity to reexamine the relation between spoken and written discourse. Wilkins, whose participants had never before been involved in CMC, noted that the computer conversation did not occupy a static place on the oral/written continuum but moved back and forth between writer-style and talker-style as interactants changed voice.

Seen from this early literature, a basic schema to understand the nature of CMC is to think of it as embodying characteristics of both speech and writing and as being affected by contexts of its use. Many researchers, following this early seminal work, continue to suggest that there are some significant similarities and differences between CMC and speech or writing. Collot and Belmore (1996) analyzed a corpus of bulletin board systems, using Biber’s (1988) multidimensional-multifeature model for analyzing language variation. They compared the corpus of electronic language with pre-existing

samples of written and spoken language and found features of both oral and written language in their bulletin board system corpus. Yates (1996) also conducted a large corpus-based comparison among spoken, written, and CMC discourse. Using the Hallidayan model of language use, Yates' analysis identified some textual features of CMC (e.g., lexical density) that were similar to those most often found in writing and others (e.g., use of first person) most often found in oral language.

In their review of the literature on the rhetoric and language of electronic mail, Moran and Hawisher (1998) focused on the difference between CMC and face-to-face communication. They observed the lack of paralinguistic and non-linguistic clues such as intonation, fillers (e.g., um, uh), and facial expressions. They also noted that turn-taking is significantly different than in face-to-face conversations because CMC allows multiple threads of discourse. At the same time, the writing of CMC is different from formal written English. In her study on the use of CMC in a large corporation, Murray (1995) noted that to save time, "computer communicators abbreviate, simplify lexis and syntax, and disregard surface errors" (p. 80). New conventions have emerged in this medium, with symbols and other textual manipulations signifying non-verbal cues, tone of voice, humor, and irony. These include the use of all capital letters to indicate shouting, asterisks surrounding words, or repeated letters and punctuation marks for emphasis, and "smileys" or other "emoticons" to indicate emotions. Although this line of research focusing on its linguistic and stylistic features of CMC discourse has contributed to our understanding of what CMC language is about, the literature taken as a whole, with its heavy reliance on corpus analysis as a methodological tool for examining the language of CMC, does not provide much information about contextual meanings of CMC texts that evolve from an interaction among particular participants in a particular context.

### Research on Interaction and Discourse Patterns of CMC

There exists a body of research that examines interaction patterns of CMC discussion. Earlier studies (Harasim, 1987; Levin, Kim & Riel, 1990) focused on the

amount and frequency of interaction among participants in CMC. Increasingly, researchers in the field called for a need to move past merely “counting” the number of times participants communicate in the CMC environment and provide more information for the field related to the quality of that interaction (Hillman, 1999; Hara, Bonk, & Angeli, 2000). Recently, researchers have begun to investigate the quality, complexity, and depth of communication as well as the amount and frequency of communication evident in CMC learning contexts. For example, Hara, Bonk, and Angeli (2000) measured the amount, quality, and cognitive depth of student discourse in asynchronous computer conferencing that was employed as a partial replacement for traditional classroom discussion in a graduate course. Reviewing the number of times students referred to other student comments, they found that these patterns of communication became more complex and frequent over time. Using content analysis, what they called “a generic name for a variety of textual analyses that typically involves comparing, contrasting, and categorizing a set of data” (p. 121), the authors reviewed CMC messages for evidence of social cues and level of cognitive skills, including elementary clarification, in-depth clarification, inferencing, judgment, and the application of strategies. Conclusions of the study illustrated an assessment of quality of interaction through the classification of the majority of messages judged to reflect an in-depth cognitively elaborate level.

Other studies included factors of amount and directionality, but also examined the purpose of messages and participant perspectives on interaction. Hillman (1999) focused on communication patterns related to the amount, purpose, and mechanisms of 52,081 sentences in a course employing CMC. He identified the purpose of online messages as organizing, lecturing, humanizing, or expressing opinions, providing a detailed view of interaction patterns in a CMC environment. Based on his findings, Hillman advocated that examining interactional patterns in research studies involving asynchronous communication should include more than quantitative tallying of number of words or postings interaction. He further argued that patterns of exchanges in this medium need to be situated in context by qualitatively examining the purpose or intention of sentences.

Zhu (1998) also explicitly analyzed the forms of electronic interaction and discourse (e.g., discussion, information sharing, reflection, high or low level questioning, etc.), the forms of student participation (i.e., wanderer, seeker, mentor, or contributor), and the direction of participant interactions (i.e., vertical or horizontal). In addition, she also created a model for the patterns of knowledge construction in student electronic discussion. In this model, Zhu begins to illustrate how new insights, knowledge, perspectives, and understanding result from instructional scaffolding within students' zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978).

Other researchers defined CMC discourse as a form of social exchange. For example, Lally and Barrett (1999) determined that socio-emotional discourse provided evidence of interaction. They found that cooperative engagement with peers and reflection on the views of others represent a socio-emotional dimension of CMC discourse. Pena-Shaff, Martin, and Gay (2001) also conducted a study that examined CMC discourse as social interchange of brainstorming and building consensus among students. Asynchronous and synchronous communication were used in this study, and it was determined that messages that asked questions, answered questions, provided support, clarified ideas, built consensus, and contained social messages were interactive in nature. Asynchronous bulletin board conferencing provided more task-related messages and were more appropriate for self-reflection, while synchronous chat demonstrated more interactivity and much less task-oriented communication.

These studies as a whole have contributed to our understanding of the dynamics of CMC interaction and discourse patterns (at the multiple levels of the cognitive, the metacognitive, the emotional, and the social) that arose from that interaction among participants in various educational settings. However, the studies cited above generally employed textual analysis based solely on the transcripts of the CMC discussion, thereby leading to potential misinterpretation of the phenomenon. Hara, Bonk, and Angeli (2000) articulated methodological concerns in the content analysis tradition. They admitted that in conducting content-analysis of online discussion, they "were aware of the need to triangulate the interpretation of participant messages," and suggested that "interviews and

retrospective reports would have been helpful and student evaluation of their own dialogue transcripts, moreover, might have validated the researchers interpretation of students' discourse" (p. 144).

### CMC Discourse as a Nexus of Contexts, Interactions, and Texts

In suggesting a research agenda for studying CMC discourse, Murray (2000) recently argued that in CMC "the complex interaction of contextual aspects results in specific bundles of linguistic features, the medium being only one aspect of context" (p. 400). Similarly, Kern and Warschauer (2000) argued that in order to understand the full impact of CMC in the classroom, we must "look beyond the texts of interaction to the broader contextual dynamics that shape and are shaped by those texts" (p. 15). Yagelski and Grabill (1998) in this regard provided a good example of exploring contextual factors that might affect CMC discourse. They gave a detailed account of how contextual factors embedded in two undergraduate writing courses may shape the students' online interaction. Data sources came from field notes of class meetings, interviews with instructors and students, surveys, and transcripts of online discussions. Results of the study revealed complex relationships between online discourse and in-class discourse within the context of a particular course. Specifically, rates of student participation in online discourse and the nature of that participation were found to relate to the nature of in-class lecture and discussion, to the ways in which the instructor framed and managed the uses of CMC technologies, to the structure of the course, and to students' perception of the importance of CMC technologies. Moreover, the nature of the online discussion in these courses was complicated even further by the students' sense of their status as undergraduates enrolled in courses within their majors, the ways in which students understood their roles as participants in course-related discourse, both in-class and online. Similarly, Gruber (1995) observed that uses of CMC are affected by "the goals established by the institution, the teaching approaches proposed by the instructors, and the expectations entertained by students" (p. 62).

In addition to such contextual factors embedded in a particular class, what individual students bring to the CMC situation may affect online interaction. Davis and Brewer (1997) undertook an analysis of the language of undergraduate linguistics students using electronic conferencing tools for a class assignment. They suggested that linguistic norms in these virtual communities evolved based on students' experiences in the new medium as well as on a lifetime of experiences with print and school-based literacies and with conversation. Souviney, Saferstein, and Chambers (1995) similarly noted that the evolving conventions of the network they studied were based on the participants' existing social groups and their experiences with the network.

Thus far, the contexts in which CMC occurs have not, by and large, been studied in sufficient depth. To understand the full impact of new forms of interacting in the classroom, we must look beyond CMC texts to the broader contextual dynamics that shape and are shaped by those texts. This entails "holistic, qualitative research that goes beyond inventories of linguistic features and attempts to account for the way classroom cultures take shape over time" (Kern & Warschauer, 2000, p. 15). Following this line of argument, my study attempts to situate CMC discourse within a particular course in which various contextual factors are embedded.

As a way to examine interaction or discourse patterns in CMC, the analysis of the content of discourse within online communities may provide a useful example of a systematic and rigorous analysis of the complexity of interaction processes occurring between participants in a particular sociocultural context. The transcripts of discussions taking place in the CMC environment contain easily accessible and potentially significant evidence of learning processes among the participants. Initially, then, the methodological challenge might, apparently, be easily resolved in terms of analytic tools through the employment of content analysis of the written messages. However, as mentioned earlier, Hara, Bonk, and Angeli (2000) articulated methodological difficulties involved in textual analysis that employs only content-analysis methods. As de Laat and Lally (2003) further argued, the theoretical frameworks for content analysis "may not be sufficiently robust to enable valid inferences to be made about any of the discourse processes from the textual

traces” (p. 11). They further acknowledged and articulated the difficulty involved in content analysis by asking “what does one do about those aspects of learning that are not expressed in, and therefore not amenable to, content analysis?” (p. 11). To date, there are very few studies that attempt to triangulate content analysis with other robust qualitative approaches that might offer access to evidence of the processes under discussion. Only very recently, a small body of research has begun to ground textual analysis within other qualitative research methods including interviews and observations.

McKee (2002), focusing on the dynamics of interracial electronic communication, studied the asynchronous posts made by college-level students who participated in a teaching and learning online collaborative project that allowed students from across the country to discuss social and political issues in the United States. Drawing from his textual analysis of the posts and from interviews with some focal students, he examined the misunderstandings that arose in the interracial discussion, situating the causes and consequences of the students’ discourse within both the local context of the electronic forum and within wider cultural patterns.

de Laat and Lally’s (2003) recent study contributed to the enriching of theoretical and methodological tools for exploring the complexity of researching networked learning processes of participants in online educational communities. Drawing on two theoretical perspectives about learning including a social constructivist view of learning and socio-cultural theory, they investigated the learning processes occurring in an online community of students engaged in a Master’s Program in E-Learning. In their effort to understand better the nature of interactions among members of this community and reveal the complex and multi-dimensional learning processes, a content analysis of individual contributions and differences in learning processes revealed in CMC texts was integrated with the use of Critical Event Recall (CER) as a complementary methodology. The CER was to “probe learning and tutoring processes that may not be expressed in the actual text records used as data for the content analysis” (p. 11). In their analysis of the recall event of one participant, the authors showed that the student engaged in many reflective and analytical observations about his learning processes by making careful judgments about



when and how to contribute based upon his interpretation of the needs and behaviors of the group and his own largely unarticulated values about the nature and purposes of online collaborative learning. Based on the findings, they argued that much of this information was not directly observable in the transcripts of the group's online work, pointing to the value of critical event recall as a way to access aspects of learning processes that are not directly available in discussion transcripts.

### **Response to the Literature**

As computer conferencing is increasingly used to supplement or even replace face-to-face learning in a variety of formal educational settings, there is a need to look at these electronic spaces as social places. This merits the development of a research approach that necessarily moves beyond the individual mind or written product itself, and that is sensitive to the particular dynamics linking texts to discourse practices, to contingent social formations (emergent and imposed rules for communicative activity). It is this complex interplay of texts, interactions, and sociocultural contexts that I set out to understand and investigate in this present study, drawing upon a Bakhtinian understanding of an utterance. The Bakhtinian framework, for understanding discourse and, more specifically, the text that the students construct in CMC contexts, is particularly useful because it takes into account what the concept of situated literacy (discourse community) has taught us – that discourse is always embedded in a particular sociocultural context from the very beginning; at the same time, however, it moves beyond the limitations of the concept discourse community by fully acknowledging the heteroglossia and the ideological struggle among various values and beliefs involved in this CMC discourse event.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHOD**

This chapter sets out the methods and procedures applied in developing and completing the study. The chapter, divided into six sections, addresses methodological issues, followed by a description of the research site and the participants, data sources and procedures, and data analysis of the study. I then discuss my role as a researcher in this study, followed by a discussion of how I worked to ensure the credibility of the study.

#### **Methodological Issues**

In Chapters 1 and 2, I demonstrated how shifting paradigmatic worldviews have directly influenced my search for a theoretical context from which to think about and frame the study of CMC texts created in a particular graduate seminar. The relationship of worldview to research methodology is just as significant as it is to the theoretical framework for the study. As suggested by Kuhn (1970), one's worldview affects where one looks and, to a larger extent, what one is able to see. Our socially constructed conceptual frames can limit as well as enable what events we see and how we make meaning from them. Thus, such constructs should not only be articulated, but also periodically interrogated for "blind spots" that they may be producing within the mind of the researcher. Accordingly, I began this project by situating myself methodologically.

The foremost goal of this study was to provide a rich description that would lead to a model of concrete forms and meanings of utterances, their interrelationships, and their interactions in the CMC speech activity that is embedded within a particular sociocultural context. As context, process, and meaning are crucial in my study, I adopted a naturalistic paradigm, or what Moss (1996) referred to as the "interpretive" perspective

on social science. As Moss explained, according to the interpretive perspective, “the object domain of social science is made up largely of symbolic constructs – texts, products, performances, and actions – that reflect the meanings, intentions, and interpretations of the individual who produce and receive them” (p. 21). In the context of a graduate seminar, the meanings of students’ CMC texts arise not from the text alone but also from the students’ own perspectives on how they produce and interpret them. Meanings arise, too, from interaction among student, classmates, teacher, and so on. As Lincoln and Guba (1985) observed, “realities are multiple, constructed, and holistic” (p. 37) and they “cannot be understood in isolation from their contexts” (p. 39).

As Murray (1978) and Della-Piana (1978) both suggested, analysis of students’ texts could provide some insight into students’ thinking processes. Therefore, analysis of CMC texts in this study could provide data concerning both the written product and possibly a window into the participants’ thinking processes. However, while analysis of the participants’ co-constructed CMC texts by itself may provide some insight into my investigation of how utterances are constructed in the CMC activity, it seemed unlikely that the participants’ understanding of the complex processes of utterance production and interpretation could be ascertained from the text alone. As Mishler (1979) noted, “Meaning is always within context and contexts incorporate meaning” (p. 14). Bogdan and Biklen (1982) also pointed out that “to divorce the act, word, or gesture from its context is ... to lost sight of significance” (p. 27). To explore fully the complexity of social and discursive processes operating in the students’ CMC utterances, it was important to ground such textual analysis within naturalistic inquiry and the students’ own understanding of their discursive processes so that I could better investigate my research questions.

This interpretive perspective calls for in-depth interviews and a holistic approach to the class experience. The advantage of employing a naturalistic design seemed to be especially appropriate given the nature of my study. This was, after all, a theory-building study, one that attempted to provide a rich description of the sociocultural context under investigation that would lead to a modeling of how utterances are constructed in this

particular context. Because all the relevant factors were clearly not known prior to the study, immersion within the field was essential to see as much as possible all that was “going on” within the classroom. To get at the various realities and meanings within the given scene, it was necessary to enter into the setting as a human instrument. By immersing myself in the field, remaining open to multiple possibilities, I was better able as researcher to understand the context of each CMC utterance from the participants’ own perspectives and, thus, was better able to identify factors that shaped the lives of utterances in context.

As a theory-building study, then, my investigation followed an emergent design, one that developed or “unfolded” during the study. Of course, this does not mean that I began with a blank slate. Rather, one might say that I began with a “working framework” for the design. As should be clear from Chapter 1, I entered into this study with a theoretical framework focusing on Bakhtin’s understanding of the social nature of language. Because I was guided by a Bakhtinian concept of utterance, I could anticipate prior to the study at least some of the ways in which this concept and my research questions might be investigated. Nevertheless, much of the design emerged from the context of the study. For instance, though I began with tentative possibilities for such research instruments as initial interview questions, and coding categories for data analysis, the precise questions and categories arose out of the study as it unfolded.

### **The Research Site and the Participants**

During the fall semester of 2002, I observed a graduate seminar on psycholinguistics at a major university in a southwestern city. The class met on Thursdays from 1 to 4. Students were expected to come to the class prepared to discuss assigned readings. Over the semester, the students participated in three in-class synchronous networked interchanges. They also participated in two asynchronous discussions held outside the class, and it is these two discussions that became the focal

point of my investigation of how utterances are constructed in a computer-mediated speech activity.

Of the 23 students (18 women and 5 men), 11 were international students and 12 American students representing various programs of study (Educational Psychology, Foreign Language Education, Language and Literacy, and Early Childhood Education) in education at the doctoral and master's level. Although clearly non-native like, the international students were fluent and competent in English. The chapter that follows gives a "thick description" of the classroom context and the participants as part of the analysis of how utterances were created by these particular graduate students and their teacher in asynchronous speech activities in this particular class. Here, I will only briefly present the students' biographical information. The following table (Table 3-1) gives individual profile information in terms of student age, nationality, sex, graduate program, and years in program. Pseudonyms replace their actual names.

**Table 3-1: The Students' Biographical Information**

Name	Age	Nationality	Sex	Graduate program and Years in Program
Ali	30's	Palestinian	M	4 <sup>th</sup> year doctoral student in Foreign Language Education
Alicia	20's	American	F	2 <sup>nd</sup> year master's student in Language and Literacy
Anne	20's	American	F	2 <sup>nd</sup> year master's student in Educational Psychology
Daehun	20's	Korean	M	3 <sup>rd</sup> year doctoral student in Foreign Language Education
Eunjoo	20's	Korean	F	2 <sup>nd</sup> year doctoral student in Early Childhood Education
Haemi	30's	Korean	F	5 <sup>th</sup> year doctoral student in Foreign Language Education
Hilda	20's	Mexican-American	F	5 <sup>th</sup> year doctoral student in Educational Psychology, Development
Hillary	20's	American	F	2 <sup>nd</sup> year master's student in Language and Literacy

<b>Name</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Nationality</b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>Graduate program and Years in Program</b>
Jason	20's	American	M	3 <sup>rd</sup> year doctoral student in Foreign Language Education
Kelly	30's	American	F	2 <sup>nd</sup> year doctoral student in Language and Literacy
Morgan	20's	American	F	2 <sup>nd</sup> year doctoral student in Educational Psychology, Learning and Cognition
Mary	20's	American	F	2 <sup>nd</sup> year master's student in Language and Literacy
Ming	20's	Taiwanese	F	2 <sup>nd</sup> year master's student in Educational Psychology
Minho	30's	Korean	M	3 <sup>rd</sup> year doctoral student in Foreign Language Education
Pei	50's	Taiwanese	F	4 <sup>th</sup> year doctoral student in Educational Psychology, Research Methodology
Rita	30's	American	F	1 <sup>st</sup> year (2 <sup>nd</sup> semester) doctoral student in Foreign Language Education
Rubin	40's	American	M	1 <sup>st</sup> year master's student in Educational Psychology
Seunghee	20's	Korean	F	2 <sup>nd</sup> year master's student in Foreign Language Education
Stacy	20's	American	F	3 <sup>rd</sup> year doctoral student in Educational Psychology, Learning and Cognition
Vivien	30's	American	F	1 <sup>st</sup> year (2 <sup>nd</sup> semester) doctoral student in Foreign Language Education
Yang	30's	Taiwanese	F	2 <sup>nd</sup> year doctoral student in Foreign Language Education
Yiping	30's	Taiwanese	F	2 <sup>nd</sup> year doctoral student in Educational Psychology, Learning and Cognition
Yujin	20's	Korean	F	3 <sup>rd</sup> year doctoral student in Educational Psychology, Learning and Cognition

My criteria for selecting this particular course on psycholinguistics were fairly simple. First, the class needed to include an asynchronous CMC component as part of text-based classroom discussions. Second, I wished to select a class that involved students from diverse backgrounds so that I could better see the dynamics of negotiating

different interests and intentions in a textual space, although it is always true that in any classroom setting there is a “heterogeneity” in its own right. The fact that this class was an interdisciplinary course that attracted students from diverse fields of study in the college of education and that it involved international students from many parts of the world made the observation of the class more interesting to me. Third, I wanted to observe a class that was taught by a teacher who considered that at least one of the primary goals for the course was to encourage students to read and write “texts” for knowledge construction and meaning negotiation. This was important because I was interested in a particular graduate class in which students were encouraged to become conversant in a variety of academic discourses and to try out multiple ways with language to investigate how utterances produced in this environment would look. I wished to discover, understand, and gain insight into the complexity of discursive practices and the kind of learning experiences involved in CMC speech activities. Therefore I needed to select a site from which the most could be learned. As Patton (1990) argued, the logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting an information-rich case for study in depth. For this study, I chose an information-rich class as a research site from which I could learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of my study. Additionally, another reason for selecting this course was that I had taken the same course on psycholinguistics with the teacher before and thus might be in a better position to understand the students’ joys and struggles in constructing CMC utterances in this class and in a better place from which to ensure the researcher-subject rapport that is so essential to naturalistic inquiry.

### **Data Sources and Procedures**

In the Fall 2002, I collected data from the following sources: 1) classroom observations supplemented by audiotapes of every class session and daily field notes on the class, 2) background interviews with the students and the teacher, 3) discourse-based interviews with the students and the teacher conducted soon after CMC texts were

created, with the purpose of gaining insight into the participants' thoughts and reasons underlying the words on the text, 4) printouts of CMC texts, 5) copies of the students' self-reflective essays, and 6) my own reflective research journal. Data from each source in this study complemented each other and helped me obtain a holistic picture of the participants' utterances created in CMC speech activities that were in turn embedded in this particular graduate course. Set out below is a description of these data-collection methods.

### **Classroom Observations**

Because this was a theory-building study for which all or most relevant factors were not already known prior to the investigation, I entered the field of the classroom as a "human instrument" in order to gain thick description of the context in which students talk through CMC. While I participated as an "interested" observer to see "what was going on" from the participants' perspective, I also consciously worked to establish and maintain a disciplined subjectivity that would provide me with enough objectivity to examine broader connections and relationships among phenomena.

I conducted classroom observations throughout the semester, attending every class meeting. I audiotaped each class session and took notes during class whenever I could do so unobtrusively. I also noted classroom observations in my researcher's journal immediately following class. By observing the class, I was able to describe some of the details of critical classroom interactions (e.g., class dynamics and the professor's interactions with students) and to examine how the classroom context influenced students' evolving sense of CMC speech activities and their utterances created in the activities. While attending and observing the class, I also collected written materials embedded in the course (e.g., readings, syllabus, handouts), which provided another window to look at how classroom activities and assignments are addressed and what the professor expected of these activities and assignments.



## **Background Interview with the Students and the Teacher**

I conducted a semi-structured background interview with 17 out of a total 23 students at the beginning of the semester. From the remaining 6 students (Pei, Daehun, Rubin, Rita, Haemi, and Hilda) who could not participate in this initial interview mostly because they were very busy with other responsibilities at the time, I was able to obtain their background information in the subsequent discourse-based interviews. In the initial interview, I focused on establishing and enhancing rapport with the students. Also, in order to gain insight into the various discourses and “voices” within the student’s life, I obtained information on such things as the student’s age, cultural and educational backgrounds, interests, goals, academic major or fields of interest, other classes the student was taking, the reasons for taking the course on psycholinguistics, his or her initial impression of the class in general, and the students’ social networks in the class. As needed, additional questions concerning background were included in the subsequent discourse-based interviews. From this initial interview with the students, I was also able to obtain information about the students’ personal perspectives and frames of reference – their sense-making – with respect to the course, teacher, purpose, and nature of assignments and classroom speech activities.

In an initial interview with the professor, I focused on understanding the teacher’s educational background, goals for the class, instructional philosophy, and her rationale behind the choice of course topics and assignments. This initial interview with the teacher also helped me understand the purpose of different forms of speech activities (oral and written) embedded in the class and her expectations for these activities.

## **Discourse-based Interviews with the Students and the Teacher**

Two one-hour discourse-based interviews were conducted with all 23 students and the teacher. Each discourse-based interview with the students and the teacher was conducted soon after CMC texts were created, usually within a week after each CMC

discussion. However, in some rare cases, when the participants could not afford the time within a limited time period, they opted to have an interview with me one or two weeks after the discussion.

The discourse-based interview provided a way for me to look at some of the participants' thoughts and reasons underlying the words on the texts. While a discourse-based interview cannot reveal all the various, on-going thoughts of a writer during the composing process, it can be useful in gaining greater insight into why students make certain rhetorical choices (Odell, Goswami, & Herrington, 1983), especially when the interview occurs soon after the text was written, and focuses on specifics in the text (Tomlinson, 1984).

Keeping in mind the advice of Bogdan and Biklen (1982), Merriam (1998), and Seidman (1998) concerning interviews in qualitative research, I structured these interviews as open-ended but still "guided." I first began the interview in a very open-ended manner, simply asking the student to tell me about the experience in general (e.g., what's your general impression about this particular asynchronous discussion? How did you experience the discussion?). Such general questions were appropriate at the early stage of the interview because, here, I was not trying to get the student to recall his or her reasons for making specific textual choices at the time of constructing their utterances. Instead, I was simply asking for a current evaluation as the student now looked back at what he or she had written.

Then, for the majority of the hour, the student and I would read through the whole transcript together and I would let the student talk about such things as what was the major motivation for writing this particular message, to whom he or she was responding, what was the major concern in composing the message, etc. Then following a procedure similar to that of Odell, Goswami, and Harrington (1983), I asked the student about specific passages that I had noted prior to the interview. I gave attention to places in the text where contextual cues or different "voices" including style shifting seemed to be present. My identification of such cues was informed by the work of Bakhtin. In conducting discourse-based interviews with the teacher, I followed the same procedures.

## **Printouts of CMC Texts**

After each CMC activity, I collected the transcript of the CMC discussion. Because I was informed by data collected from all the various procedures noted above, I had a much greater sense of context that would allow me to analyze more fully the processes that lie beyond the text itself and help me identify various voices and contextual factors embedded within the text.

I examined the transcript with potential Bakhtinian concepts in mind prior to the discourse-based interviews. When examining the CMC transcript, I referred to any reading assigned during the unit, the assignment sheet, the transcript of background interview with the students and the teacher, classmates' comments, and the teacher's comments from class discussions in order to identify places where the student might be responding to the interests, needs, questions, or concerns expressed by the teacher, classmates, authors of assigned reading, other points of view discussed in the readings, and so on. I also identified phrases that appeared potentially useful in gaining information during the discourse-based interviews. For instance, specific tone and diction that a student used might be indicators that the student was considering a particular kind of audience. I also noted places where the student used an example to illustrate a point. The kind of example used might point to the students' background information that had not been revealed in an initial interview. During my initial analysis of the CMC transcript, I noted such places in the text and then asked the student for more information during the interviews.

Following my initial analysis of the transcript, I conducted discourse-based interviews to develop and revise my analysis. Following each interview, I took notes and used these notes to check my initial analysis. Thus, I was revising and developing my analysis of the transcripts during the semester as I continued to collect data. However, even more analysis took place following data collection as I transcribed all the interviews, coded them, and then developed and revised my on-going analysis of the

transcript according to the students' own explanations for why they responded to a particular person, wrote a particular phrase, used a particular example, etc.

### **Self-Reflective Essay on Written Discussion**

As part of the assignments for the course, the students submitted a self-reflective essay on written discussion. The purpose of the analysis of written discussion was to make the students reflect on what had happened to them in written discussion. In this self-reflective exercise, the students were asked to describe the kind of learning they experienced, and the kind of linguistic, cognitive, affective, social, and cultural reactions that they had during the written discussion. The reader should note that because the students were informed on the first class that I would use their written analysis as one of my primary data sources, their self-report on the experiences with the written discussion might have been influenced by the fact that I as well as the teacher would read and analyze them later on. One student even asked me not to use her self-reflective essay as data for the study, because she would be self-conscious in her report, even though she agreed to participate in text-based interviews. Nevertheless, from a researcher's point of view, the students wrote very honest responses with the understanding that this exercise was intended not to "please" the teacher but to become more aware of themselves as learners in this environment. This self-reflective essay proved to be extremely helpful in providing information not mentioned in the interviews as well as in allowing me to peep into the students' crystallized after-thoughts about their experiences with the written discussion.

### **My Own Reflective Research Journal**

Within this journal, I recorded not only descriptive observations but also my on-going reflections, insights, questions, and concerns related to all facets of the research process, including my own roles within the investigation. During the interview sessions, I also

included notes to supplement the interview transcripts because “the tape-recorder misses the sights, the smells, the impressions and the extra remarks said before and after the interview” (Bogdan and Biklen, 1982, p. 75). Ranging from a few sentences to several pages, these memos were instrumental in enabling me to trace the patterns emerging from the data, particularly as the amount of data increased.

### **Data Analysis**

In working with the qualitative data from the various sources noted previously, I followed the naturalistic procedures set out by Lincoln and Guba (1985). The first part of the analysis was inductive and on-going throughout the investigation. While I was in the process of collecting data, I was also continuously taking notes, both descriptive and reflective, keeping track of what I had so far and analyzing it, arriving at new insights, and developing tentative categories for coding my findings. This on-going data-analysis process also helped to devise more fine-tuned questions or strategies for subsequent interviews based on ideas I had or questions that needed further exploration. The second part of the analysis occurred after all data had been collected and the audio-taped interviews had been transcribed in their entirety. This involved the final development of coding categories and a development of a model that shows an array of interrelationships between categories. Throughout the process, I continually searched in the existing literature for relevant constructs. The purpose of my inquiry in the whole processes of data analysis was to develop and refine categories of the phenomenon under investigation to allow a comprehensive description and interpretation of human activities.

In addition to the more general qualitative, interpretive methods described above, my approach was also guided by a critical discourse analysis strategy proposed by Fairclough (1992). Claiming that “any discursive ‘event’ (i.e. any instance of discourse) is seen as being simultaneously a piece of text, an instance of discursive practice, and an instance of social practice” (p. 4), he provided a good analytic framework for integrating a description of discourse with a description of its context of production and

interpretation. Fairclough's advice that it is useful to "begin with some sense of the social practice that the discourse is embedded within" (p. 231) in developing and presenting a model for discourse also led me to follow the progression of the analysis and presentation of the data for the study from social practice to discursive practice and only then, to text.

### **The Researcher as Human Instrument**

One of the main goals of naturalistic inquiry is to gain a fuller understanding of the whole context in which any phenomenon occurs. This context necessarily includes the researcher. No matter how unobtrusive or objective the researcher tries to be, he or she becomes a part of the context and shapes, at least to some degree, the phenomenon that is being investigated. Because qualitative studies position a researcher as the main instrument of collection, analysis, and interpretation of data, it is important to reflect a bit on my background and perspective as a researcher with respect to this study.

A 28 year old Korean woman at the time of the study, I was a fourth-year doctoral student in Foreign Language Education and my broader focus of study was on considerations of sociocultural issues with respect to the learning and teaching of writing and other literacy skills. Throughout my graduate years, I engaged in a vast array of writing tasks that my program required. As a second language learner of English, I experienced joys and sorrows in learning to write in English in this particular disciplinary community and witnessed how my own perceptions of academic discourse have changed over time: from the naïve perception that academic writing should have a fixed structure and recognizable style to the understanding that academic genres are patterns of situated activity rather than fixed unity. The impetus behind such a perceptual change in my understanding of academic writing had much to do with my own active involvement with and reflection on a series of writing tasks (including CMC activities) I had completed in my graduate courses. The class I investigated in my present study was the one that in fact helped me to reconceptualize academic writing tasks when I took the same course taught by the same professor in the summer of 2000. Therefore, on the one hand, these connections made it easier to build rapport with the professor and the graduate students in

order to facilitate the students' talking openly to me in interview sessions. On the other hand, my previous experiences with the class and the professor and my preconceptions of CMC speech activities might have interfered with a balanced interpretation of the situations I observed. Moreover, the fact that the professor of the course was my dissertation chair and I was observing her class may have put the professor occasionally into an "awkward" situation in which she had to take a double-role as a participant of my study and a chair of my dissertation. The students were all aware of the situation and this might have influenced the students' responses to my research inquiries. However, throughout this project, I had the impression that as graduate students who had conducted or would conduct their own research at some point throughout their graduate life, they had learned how to be good research participants, as the professor did as she had been involved in many research projects conducted in her own classes.

### **Assuring Credibility of the Study**

Though naturalistic inquiry necessarily embraces subjectivity, it is nevertheless essential that the naturalistic study remains rigorous (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and that the naturalistic researcher develops a "disciplined subjectivity" (Kantor, Kirby, & Goetz, 1981, p. 297), one that provides enough objectivity to see the broader connections and relationships among phenomena.

My study incorporated some techniques in order to meet the standards of credibility for naturalistic inquiry. First, my investigation employed "prolonged engagement," what Lincoln and Guba (1985) described as "the investment of sufficient time to achieve certain purposes: learning the culture, testing for misinformation introduced by distortions either of the self or of the respondents, and building trust" (p. 301). I attended and observed the class for an entire semester and this provided me with a lengthy and close examination of this particular course. It also allowed me to capture some of the details of critical classroom interactions. In addition, I could better understand the nature of CMC speech activity embedded within the class culture. This

understanding assisted me in more accurately identifying the students' reasons for the choices they made as they engaged in the CMC activity.

In addition to prolonged, in-depth observation, I achieved triangulation by employing multiple sources for collecting data including 1) classroom observations supplemented by audiotapes of every class session and daily field notes on the class, 2) background interviews with the students and the teacher, 3) discourse-based interviews with the students and the teacher conducted soon after CMC texts were created, 4) printouts of CMC texts, 5) copies of the students' self-reflective essays, and 6) my reflective research journal. Not only did triangulation provide me with the means of observing data that may have been overlooked by one source of data collection, it also allowed me to see the same data from various perspectives and, in the process, to clarify the meaning of the data in its fuller context.

In the process of analyzing the data collected from these multiple sources, I discussed my on-going investigation with a fellow doctoral student who knew a great deal about both the area of my inquiry and the methodological issues. Such discussions served the purpose of "peer debriefing," what Lincoln and Guba described as "exposing oneself to a disinterested professional peer" to "keep the inquirer honest." Informal conversations about this study with her assisted in developing and testing categories as well as "obtain emotional catharsis" (p. 308).



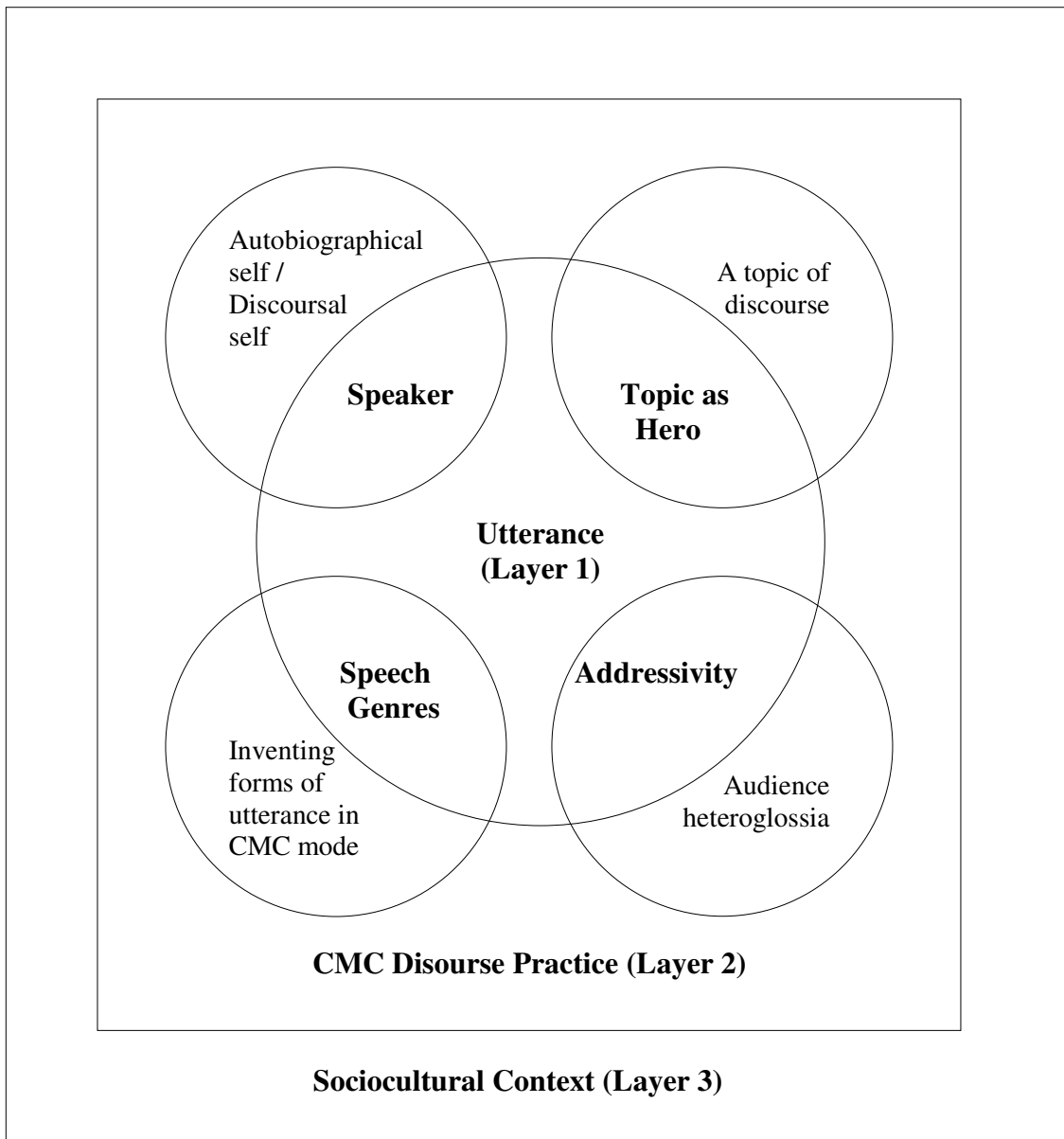
## **CHAPTER 4**

### **THE SOCIOCULTURAL CONTEXT**

#### **Overview of the Analysis Running through Chapters 4, 5, and 6**

Emerging from the data of this study was a multidimensional model of an utterance that showed an array of relational possibilities in CMC: One's utterance is both constrained and enabled by who she is as she speaks relative to one's self, the topic, the audience, and speech genres contingent on a CMC speech activity situated in a particular sociocultural institutional context. Figure 4-1 illustrates the multi-layered relationships among various forces that shaped an utterance in CMC.

**Figure 4-1: Multidimensional Model of an Utterance**



The outer layer represents the context of culture that can be best described as “the constant interaction of competing systems of values, beliefs, practices, norms, conventions and relations of power which have been shaped by the socio-political history of an institution” (Ivanic, 1998, p. 47). Bakhtin contributed to an understanding of the

way in which values, beliefs, and practices in the context of culture constrain what can be said in a particular instance of language use, and of the role of language in maintaining and contesting values, beliefs, and practices within that particular sociocultural context. In his own words, “Each word tastes of the context and contexts in which it has lived its socially charged life” (1981, p. 273). The sociocultural context that contributed to shaping CMC discourse production, discourse interpretation, and the text itself in this study is presented in Chapter 4 in a description of classroom culture in terms of where the students came from, what the teacher’s instructional philosophy was, how the class was organized, and what kinds of activities, assignments, and evaluation methods were offered. Of special concern was to show how such contextual factors contributed to the students’ experience of CMC activities in the class.

The middle layer represents discourse practice in CMC, the actual CMC discourse production and interpretation processes. This layer connects the wider classroom context to a series of CMC texts. Drawing on Bakhtin’s overarching construct, “intertextuality,” in which any concrete utterance is “a link in the chain of speech communication of a particular sphere” (1986, p. 91), I looked into the sort of distributional networks and intertextual chains into which CMC messages entered, and the sorts of transformation that they went through, thereby attempting to describe the overall characteristics of CMC texts in Chapter 5.

The inner layer shows how each individual utterance in CMC was shaped at the crossroad of speaker, topic, addressivity, and speech genres. These were in turn inextricable from the various local, institutional, and socio-historical conditions within which CMC speech activities were situated. In Chapter 6, I explore this ever-present internal dialogism that pervaded each individual utterance by focusing on these essential components that built into any concrete utterance in CMC with varying degrees.

In understanding this multidimensional model of an utterance in CMC, one should keep in mind that what is at issue is not the bounded categories, but rather the reciprocal simultaneity that yokes each of these categories in dialogue with each other. That is, this model should be viewed as a recursive model of an utterance that assumes an ecological

approach in which everything is connected to everything else. In this regard, Bakhtin's (1990) construct of architectonics will help illustrate the interrelationship between the categories embedded in the multiple layers.

Bakhtinian architectonics, which was intended to describe any human activity, can be viewed as concerned with questions of building, of the way something is put together. What is essential for Bakhtin is not only the categories that constitute a given activity, but the dialogic relations between them. For Bakhtin, the relations that architectonics orders are always in a state of dynamic tension. The matter of architectonics is active in the sense that it is always in process as opposed to the stone and wood deployed by the architect. While in architecture even the most abstract categories such as "being" or "relation" itself can still be treated as static entities when conceived as in themselves, Bakhtinian architectonics conceive their materiality as having not merely physical presence as things in themselves, but also a relation to other things. With this Bakhtinian concept of architectonics, one should try to understand the dialogic relation between the categories embedded in the multiple layers surrounding this particular human activity of CMC - "the invisible relation between them, the immaterial lineaments of the simultaneities that bind them" (Bakhtin, 1990, p. xxiv).

### **LAYER 3: THE SOCIOCULTURAL CONTEXT**

As I mentioned in Chapter 3, Fairclough's (1992) critical discourse analysis strategies involving a combination of "micro-analysis" and "macro-analysis" have guided me in how I might present the data of the study. According to Fairclough, micro-analysis focuses on the "explication of precisely how participants produce and interpret texts on the basis of their members' resources," which must be complemented with macro-analysis "in order to know the nature of the members' resources (including orders of discourse) that is being drawn upon in order to produce and interpret texts, and whether it is drawn upon in normative or creative ways" (p. 85). I start with macro-analysis because one cannot carry out micro-analysis without knowing the sociocultural

context in which any utterance is embedded. While Fairclough admitted that the macro-analysis of social practice is difficult to reduce to a set of categories, the general objective should be to “specify the nature of the social practice of which the discourse practice is a part, which is the basis for explaining why the discourse practice is as it is” (p. 237).

Therefore, the outer layer developed in my study, the classroom context, attends to the issues of concern such as the institutional and organizational circumstances of the discursive event (here, asynchronous CMC speech activities) and how these shape the nature of discourse production and interpretation, and the characteristics of the utterance itself. This dimension of sociocultural context will be presented in a description of the classroom culture in terms of where the students came from, what were the teacher’s instructional philosophy and goals for the class, what were the major themes of the course, what kinds of assignments and evaluation methods were offered, and what were major classroom speech activities. The graduate seminar on psycholinguistics I observed in this study occurred in particular institutional circumstances and involved particular students, teacher, and activities; the class emerged as a local history of events embedded within other micro- and macro histories. In investigating the complex particularity and situatedness of the class as a sociocultural dimension, a special effort has been made to ensure that this investigation will shed light on subsequent text-based analysis.

### **The Nature of the Members’ Resources**

In order to delineate the sociocultural context in which CMC speech activities are embedded, it is important to understand the nature of the members’ resources in the classroom that are drawn upon to produce and interpret utterances in the activities. Towards this end, I will start my inquiry by identifying who the members were and what backgrounds they brought to the class.

Of the 23 students enrolled in the course on psycholinguistics, 18 were women and 5 were men. These 23 students formed the core of the classroom community. The students came from various programs in education at the doctoral and master’s level: 9

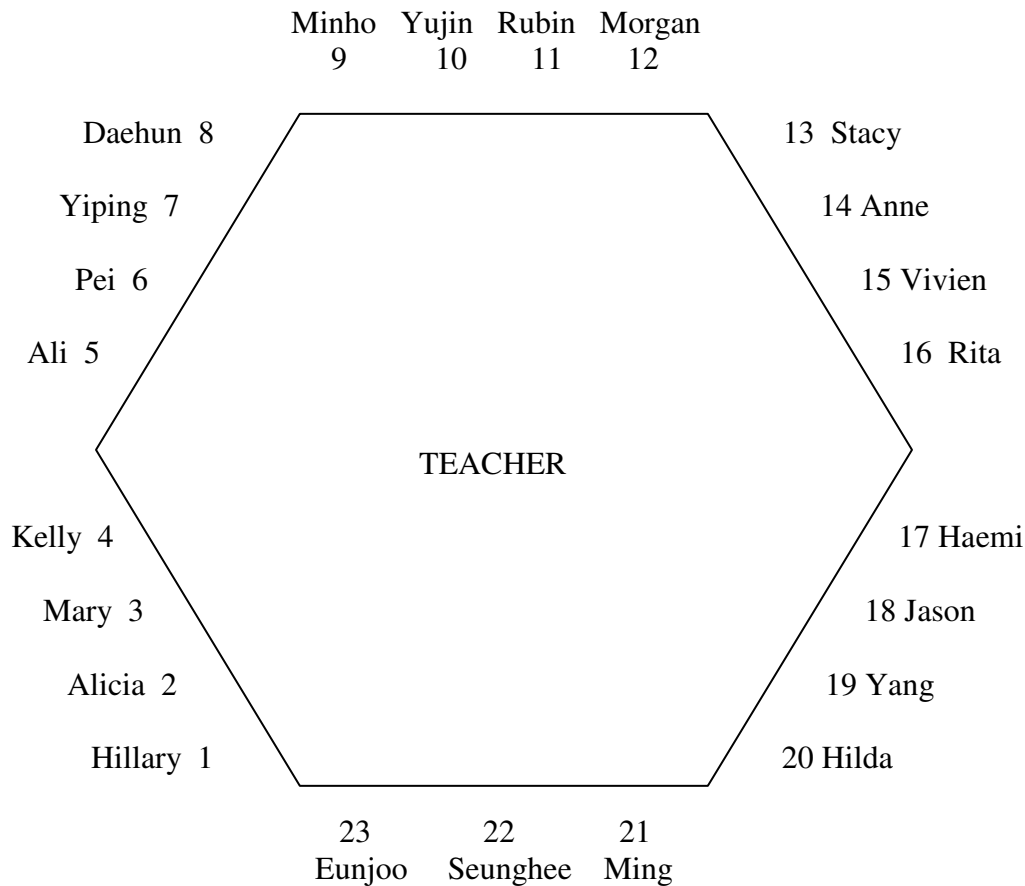
students from Educational Psychology (6 doctoral students and 3 master's students); 9 students from Foreign Language Education (8 doctoral students and 1 master's student); 4 students from Language and Literacy (1 doctoral student and 3 master's students); and 1 doctoral student from Early Childhood Education. Although Foreign Language Education, Language and Literacy, and Early Childhood Education were sub-programs housed in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction, the students in the study considered each program as a sort of "stand-alone" discipline different from each other. Therefore I will keep the distinction between the three programs when referring to the students' field of study. In the department of Educational Psychology, there were three specialized areas of doctoral studies represented in my participants: Learning and Cognition, Development, and Research Methodology. The doctoral students in Educational Psychology also differentiated their specialized area of study from other areas in the department, thus I will refer to the students' fields of study by their domain areas. This group of students was also diverse in terms of ethnicity. There was one Palestinian, four Taiwanese, seven Korean, one Mexican-American, and eleven white Americans. The students' ages ranged from their 20's to 50's, many falling into the range of 20s to 30s.

### **The Students and Their Backgrounds**

To illustrate how the members' resources formed the core of the classroom culture, I will present the students' profiles in detail, focusing on each person's background brought to the classroom, their reasons and goals for taking the course on psycholinguistics, and their initial impressions of the classroom. When introducing the students, I follow the order of a seating chart that I drew during my classroom observation so that the reader can also get a sense of how social networks among students were being formed in the class by looking at who sat next to whom. The following seating chart (Figure 4-2) was drawn from a classroom observation I made on Oct. 17

around the middle of the semester. Note that with some minor variations, this seating chart represents a typical way the students sought their seating place in the class.

**Figure 4-2: Seating Chart**



Hillary, a 27-year old American female, was a second-year master's student in Language and Literacy at the time the study took place. Prior to studying in her program, she had worked in an urban elementary school where many students struggled with reading and writing. Regarding her current research interests, Hillary said that she was interested in online book clubs and how this form of talk enhances the quality of students' reading and writing. After earning her master's degree, she planned to go back to the elementary classroom while taking some classes toward her Ph. D. on a part-time

basis. She eventually wanted to work with student teachers. She chose to take the course on psycholinguistics because she liked Nancy. Hillary had known Nancy since taking a course from her during her teacher training as an undergraduate. She wanted to take a graduate course from her: "She is a really wonderful teacher." The fact that this course had an online component was also appealing to her, given her research interest in online conversations. Categorizing herself as "pretty outgoing talking person," Hillary was excited about the course because of its diversity: "Not just a bunch of people with the same major, the same people with same experiences." As for her goal for the class, she wanted to get to hear other people in this class: "I know people in my department really well. I take classes with them, so it's like, you are always with the same people. So I am really interested in hearing what everybody else's experiences are because they are so diverse. So I hope we get to hear more about them." Hillary felt rather familiar with the topics of the class although the readings were not geared only to her own discipline. She appreciated Nancy's effort to touch on everybody's discipline: "She is picking readings that deal with everybody's discipline, so we see some that are about teaching younger children, and older people, theory-based readings as well as practicum-based readings, so I see that. In all of it, she reaches everybody on some plane." Hillary was self-conscious of the fact that she talked often in class at least at the beginning of the semester: "I talk too much because everyone else is so quiet." She attributed the lack of other students' involvement in oral discussion to Nancy's role in it: "Nancy often takes on the role of lecturing." She knew students (Alicia, Mary, and Kelly) from her own program very well and almost always sat next to these students.

Alicia was a 22-year old American female who was working on her master's degree in Language and Literacy. Having earned her bachelor's degree in early childhood education, she continued on with her master's work in Language and Literacy. The semester the study took place was her last semester in her graduate work. Alicia wanted to take a teaching job in elementary school after graduation. Alicia chose to take the course on psycholinguistics firstly because Nancy was highly recommended by many people. When Nancy had visited her summer class as a guest speaker, Alicia had the



impression that Nancy's ideas of motivation and learning and many of her research interests overlapped with the readings she had already done in her program: "I have a lot of work done with struggling readers and there's motivational and a lot of stuff going on there. I found it very interesting. I think that's what interests me because it overlaps with what I am doing." She felt very familiar with the course topics and confident in what she already knew about them, although she believed that "there's always something new you can pick up." She had a positive attitude about collaborative learning: "If you've got a great group, responding and working together, if you've got a great discussion going, I can learn more than just listen to the professor." However, she did not see it happen very often in the oral class, at least at the outset of the semester. She had a closely-knit community of her own in the class: Language and Literacy people (Hillary, Mary, and Kelly). She did not know many students from other programs.

Mary, a 27-year old American female, was a second-year master's student in Language and Literacy at the time she took the course on psycholinguistics. With her bachelor's degree in elementary education and educational research, she had taught in an elementary school until she decided to go to the graduate school. She chose Language and Literacy as her field of study because she wanted to "keep teaching, but specialize in something in the area of language arts and readings." After earning her master's degree in the following year, she planned to get a teaching job at an elementary school. She chose to take the course on psycholinguistics because Nancy and her course were highly recommended by other students and professors in her program and because the course was appealing to her. Mary showed a high level of confidence in her knowledge in the field: "My undergraduate minor was cognitive psychology and I took several language and literacy courses in my current program, so I am pretty familiar with the area." Mary perceived the class to be too large, in contrast with many other Language and Literacy courses: "In my other classes last semester we did a lot of small group activities, a lot of small discussions, and everyone kind of shared, and also a lot more people participated. I think in our class so far, it's like few talkers and I am one of them." She had close social

networks with Language and Literacy people (Hillary, Alicia, and Kelly). She did not know other students in the class.

Kelly, an American female in her 30s, was a second-year doctoral student in the Language and Literacy program at the time the study took place. With her bachelor's and master's degree in speech language pathology, she had worked with young children and school-aged children who had problems with reading before she began her doctoral studies in Language and Literacy in the fall of 2001. She chose to study in Language and Literacy because she felt that getting a doctoral degree in Language and Literacy would allow her to look at an educational side, while still working with children with reading difficulties. She thought that the field of speech language pathology was very qualitatively driven and clinically oriented and she needed an educational background. As for her current disciplinary interests, she was interested in how a speech language pathologist and a reading teacher can co-function in helping children with language problems. In her master's program in speech and language pathology, Kelly stated she had studied quite a bit about linguistics (e.g. how children develop syntax and morphology). With her background in linguistics, she felt that this course on psycholinguistics would offer her another angle to look at children's language development. As with other students from Language and Literacy, Kelly's primary reason for taking this course was because it was highly recommended by her fellow graduate students who had taken Nancy's course before. Kelly had a prior idea of what topics would be covered in the class, because she had an opportunity to talk with Nancy about the course when Nancy was invited to her summer class as a guest speaker. So the course topics were close to what Kelly had expected. Even with her background in linguistics and her perceived familiarity with the topics, Kelly reported that she became passive at the outset of the semester because she felt that other students knew the topics better: "I'm always well aware that they probably know all this stuff, they might have read all these articles, they are maybe comfortable talking because it's an educational psychology program, I think. I'm more passive probably because I don't feel this is really an area of my expertise even though I thought that I would feel more that way because of

my background.” Kelly said she felt comfortable talking with the students (Hillary, Alicia, and Mary) in Language and Literacy, but she would love to hear other students from other programs talk about their interests in this class.

Ali, a Palestinian male in his 30s, was a fourth-year doctoral student in Foreign Language Education. With his master’s degree in TESOL, he had taught English in his country prior to coming to the U. S. for his doctoral studies. He looked for a program that could help him understand language learning and teaching regardless of the kind of language, and the program of Foreign Language Education was his choice. An advanced doctoral student, he was at the stage of writing up his dissertation about culture in the foreign language classroom at the time the study took place. He was taking the course on psycholinguistics as part of degree requirements. He said if he had a choice, he would not take the course, because “this is my last course. No more hard work.” His goal for the class was very minimal: to fulfill his requirement (“to get credit”) and learn something about the topics (“hopefully, new discovery, new theory”). Ali commented that some of the topics were familiar and others were totally new. Identifying himself as a quiet person (“All my life, all my classes, I have been a quiet person. I rarely participate in the classroom discussion”), he predicted that he would be just the same in this class. He had not taken courses with Nancy before. He knew only a few of the FLE students from other courses he had taken before, but he said he did not know them well.

Pei, a Taiwanese woman in her 50s, was a fourth-year doctoral student in Educational Psychology, Research Methodology, at the time the study took place. She had begun her graduate studies in the late 1980s in the U. S. Not having finished her degree, she had left to work in child protection services for many years. She had recently returned to the graduate program to finish her doctoral studies. Her major motivation for taking this course on psycholinguistics was to “learn and experience something new.” She had not taken courses with Nancy before, but she was taking another course on Writing Seminar (which also had a synchronous CMC component) with Nancy in the same semester the study took place. She differentiated herself from other students in the class for several reasons. She said, “I’m older than most other students and I’ve

experienced more because I'm older, and therefore I have learned different perspectives that they haven't learned." In commenting on other "young" students in the class, she revealed that she did not connect with them very much because of the differences of age and experiences: "I think most of the people in the class, their perspectives are still on, not in that society. ... Because I have worked in child protection services, I've been outside the academia. I know what the world, the part of the world is like, so I can put on a different perspective." Pei did not know many of the students in the class. Even educational psychology students were not familiar to her because she was the only one from her area in the department.

Yiping, a 32-year old Taiwanese female, was enrolled in a doctoral program in Educational Psychology, Learning and Cognition. She had worked as an elementary teacher in Taiwan with her master's degree in special education before she began her doctoral studies in the U. S. in the fall of 2001. She chose to take the course on psycholinguistics because she wanted to know more about theories of language use. As for her research interests, she was interested in the relationship between emotion and learning. She said she was somewhat familiar with the topics, but not totally. She was particularly familiar with reading comprehension processes, the field of study in which she had worked on in her master's program. Although she had not taken courses with Nancy before the semester, she had already known her as a social constructivist: "I know she is always a social constructivist. Even in this class I can observe clearly that she always encourages the students to discuss to construct meaning." Yiping did not know many of the students in the class. Compared to other educational psychology courses she had taken, she felt that there were more international students (especially students from Foreign Language Education) in the class who engaged in discussion. She attributed the international students' relative active participation in the discussion to Nancy's effort to encourage the students to talk. Yiping, however, perceived herself as a rather "passive" learner: "I seldom engage in the discussion in other classes. So the same in this class." She had already known a few of the Taiwanese students before taking the course. She did not have much social interaction with other students inside or outside the class.

Daehun, a 28-year old Korean male, was a third-year doctoral student in Foreign Language Education. After earning his master's degree in TESOL in Korea, he had decided to continue on with his doctoral studies in foreign language education and chosen to study at the university where the investigation took place. His primary reason for taking the course on psycholinguistics was because it was a degree requirement. Because he had taken a course on psycholinguistics in Korea that solely focused on second language learning and teaching, he initially expected the course would be tailored for FLE students only. A discourse-based interview with him revealed that he thought that all the students were taking the course because they were interested in second language acquisition until he realized that more than half of the students were from different programs at the mid-semester. I could not interview him at the beginning of the semester. His initial confusion about the course's purpose and other students' backgrounds led him to engage selectively in class discussions either orally or in writing. He said that only when he felt the course topics were relevant to his field of study did he tend to pay closer attention to the readings and engage in the discussions; otherwise he just skimmed the readings and participated in the discussions out of his sense of obligation. He knew Minhoo very well and almost always sat next to him.

Minho, a Korean male in his 30s, was a third-year doctoral student in Foreign Language Education at the time he took the course on psycholinguistics. After earning his master's degree in translation and interpretation, he had worked as an interpreter at a large company in Korea. He decided to continue on with his doctoral studies in Foreign Language Education because he realized that he liked teaching. Minhoo chose to take the course on psycholinguistics, primarily because he wanted Nancy on his dissertation committee: "I was often told by my other classmates and my seniors that she is very nice, and she can be a good supervisor or reader." He also wanted to further his understanding of language and thought. Because he had already taken one course with Nancy in the summer of 2002, he felt comfortable with the overall classroom organization. However, he expressed that the course content was not familiar to him ("I guess my understanding of the content of this course is around less than fifty percent"), especially because the

readings were from non-FLE journals. But he added that he tried to understand the course content from an EFL teacher's perspective. He also expressed that he tried to be active in any course he took in the U. S., although it was not always easy to do so. He had many "acquaintances" from FLE in this class but did not know them very well except for some Korean students (Daehun and Seunghee).

Yujin, a 29-year old Korean female, was a third-year doctoral student in Educational Psychology, Learning and Cognition. Her undergraduate major was not in an educational field, but she realized that she had a passion for teaching. After earning her master's degree in educational psychology in Korea, she decided to continue on her studies in Educational Psychology at the university where the study took place. As for her research interests, she was interested in motivation and learning. By taking the course on psycholinguistics, she hoped to learn how language intersects with motivation. She felt she was familiar with the topics because the relationship between language and thought had been always an object of her disciplinary interest. She said that she was in fact excited to hear that the class would address these topics. She had taken a course on psychology of learning with Nancy before the semester. She evaluated Nancy's teaching style very positively: "Nancy is very active, inviting students to the class discussion. She has a voice that never bores students and she has a facial expression that attracts students into the topic. She is trying to experiment with new things. I think CMC is one of them. Most of all, she has a passion for her subject matter." She knew very well some students in Educational Psychology (Stacy and Morgan), and one Korean student (Eunjoo) from another program. Overall, she felt very comfortable with the class.

Rubin, a 48-year old American male, was a first-year master's student in educational psychology. Prior to being officially enrolled in the program, he had studied at the university for one year as a non-degree seeking student. His undergraduate degree was in theology and classical foreign languages. He had a master's degree in psychology and theology. For Rubin, the field of educational psychology was his third venture into graduate school. He chose to take the course on psycholinguistics at the last moment as an alternative when one of his classes was cancelled the day before registration. Rubin

basically chose the course because it “sounded like fun.” A Lutheran pastor, Rubin said he played with language on a regular basis, so psycholinguistics sounded like something he could enjoy. However, Rubin expressed that he initially felt like an outsider in the class because he was not familiar with the language used in this field of educational psychology: “I’m from a different discipline and the way conversation is going sometimes excludes me because I don’t have that language, the educational psychology as a language.” Rubin further commented on his struggle in this class: “This is the field I have little experiences. Part of that has been just learning a different language – the way words are used and the concepts that go with them. If you don’t speak in that particular language, you are an outsider. You are not really a part of the field.” With this feeling of not knowing the language of the field, Rubin said he often found himself asking in class “What did they really mean by that comment, statement, question, etc.?” He had not taken courses with Nancy before the semester. He did not know anyone in the class prior to taking the class.

Morgan, a 28-year old American female, was a second-year doctoral student in Educational Psychology, Learning and Cognition. She chose to pursue her doctoral degree with a vision that she wanted to fix the public school system: “I was really infuriated by the failing I see in the public school system, and so the public school system seemed broken and I wanted to fix it. But you need a Ph. D. after your name, and then they will listen to you.” Morgan said she had wanted to take the course on psycholinguistics since her first semester in the program, and she was really happy finally to take the course. She reported that she had always been fascinated with psycholinguistic phenomena, and she was glad that by taking the course she would get the opportunity to look critically at language and thought with a sound basis of theory. She was satisfied with Nancy’s selection of the topics for the course: “This class so far has been pretty much what I thought it would be. And I’m happy with that.” Even though she had not taken courses with Nancy before, she felt very close to Nancy because she had many opportunities to talk to Nancy in other situations: “She was present in our area colloquium so we talked a lot.” She commented that Nancy very much represented the

culture of her area: “She and most of the educational psychology professors [in my area] seem to have a very much of interactive discussion going on, almost like informal. They are very interested in what the students have to say and what they are thinking.” Overall, Morgan felt very comfortable with this class. Morgan described herself as a “social” learner. She valued other students’ contribution to the class discussion very much. Morgan knew some of the Educational Psychology students from other classes but did not know students from other programs. She was very excited about the diversity of the class.

Stacy, a 26-year old American female, was a third-year doctoral student in Educational Psychology, Learning and Cognition. She had worked for a computer software company prior to applying for a doctoral program in Educational Psychology. While working at the company, she had become interested in educational technology. She started looking for programs that would incorporate learning and technology tools. For Stacy, educational psychology seemed like a place to apply all the learning theories and to work with students. Currently working on her candidacy paper about building metacognitive prompts into a computer-based learning environment, Stacy was interested in how to use learning theory to make educational technology better for learners to improve their learning experiences. She ultimately wanted to teach at the university level after earning her Ph. D. Stacy said she chose this course on psycholinguistics because of Nancy. She had had a class with her before and she had really enjoyed it. Stacy also thought that the topic on psycholinguistics sounded really interesting. Even though Stacy did not know for certain how familiar she was with the course content, she felt the articles were interesting to read. She felt comfortable with the way the class organized: “Most of the classes I’ve taken in my program have been sort of the same way where we sit in circle, we are encouraged to speak and share with each other. So I guess most of my classes have been that way.” Stacy identified herself as a shy student: “I kind of listen all the time in oral discussion, so I just hope I actually contribute to the discussion in some way. In a lot of my classes, I don’t know if it’s because I am shy or what it is, but I don’t say anything unless I really really have something important to say. So I guess I am



pretty passive in a lot of my classes unless it's really a small class." Stacy knew only a few students from her program (Mary and Yujin), but did not know a majority of the students in the class.

Anne, a 26-year old American female, was pursuing her master's degree in Educational psychology. The semester the study took place was Anne's third semester in her program. After earning her master's degree, she wanted to work with students with learning disabilities in schools. She had no plan to continue on with her doctoral studies. She chose to take the course on psycholinguistics just because she thought it would be interesting. Even though she said she did not know much about psycholinguistics and that she had not had any formal education in it, she felt that she was familiar with the general topics of the course: "I think a lot of things can be picked up just by being in the world, and listening and paying attention to it." She had not taken courses with Nancy before the semester but she felt this was not unusual: "Every class I go to in graduate school, most of the time I have not had the professor before. So that's okay." She felt the readings were difficult, but they did not pose as a big obstacle: "The readings are kind of difficult, so hard to grasp, takes long time to read them. But it's okay." She did not know most of the students in the class. She knew only a few students from other classes, but had no social relationships with them in or outside the class.

Vivien, a 32-year old American female, was a first-year (second semester) doctoral student in Foreign Language Education. After earning her master's degree in linguistics, she had gone overseas (to Korea) and taught English at the university-level. There, she realized that she really liked working with students and decided to apply for a doctoral program in Foreign Language Education, because she knew that she would need some education background rather than pure linguistics courses to continue on with her career as a teacher and researcher working with international students. Vivien chose to take the course on psycholinguistics because she had heard "a lot of good things about Professor Green," and she figured that "taking a course with her would be helpful because she's had the educational psychology background." Vivien felt that she was familiar with the general topics of the course because she had taken a second language

acquisition course and one cognitive educational psychology course before the semester. She was glad that the course was education oriented. Vivien categorized herself as a very shy person. She reported that speaking in class generally was hard for her while typing out comments was easy for her. She was glad that the class had a written discussion component. Vivien commented that there were many more majors represented in this class: She had not taken courses with students from Language and Literacy before. In the class, Vivien identified Rita as her best friend. They almost always sat next to each other in the class. She knew some FLE students but had not established social relationships with them.

Rita, an American female in her 30s, was a first-year (second semester) doctoral student in Foreign Language Education. She had her master's in Italian and she had taken many "pure" linguistics courses in her master's program. She chose to take the course on psycholinguistics because she wanted to learn more about the educational side of language learning and teaching. Prior to taking the course, she was aware that the course itself was not geared toward second language education and so she entered the course with an open-mind: "I would do more about foreign language education, but it's not a major part of the syllabus, so I'm flexible to it. I didn't expect it would be foreign language based. I would love to take a course with Dr. Green taught only on foreign language acquisition. But since I didn't have the expectation that this course would, I'm definitely okay with the topics of the course." Aside from the different backgrounds of the students represented in the class, she felt that the class was relatively normal in her graduate program in the field of education: "There was a very relaxed tone in the course and the professor didn't spend a lot of time just lecturing." Rita felt comfortable with the class. She sat next to her close friend, Vivien, almost all the time in the class.

Haemi, a Korean female in her 30s, was a fifth-year doctoral student in Foreign Language Education. She had earned her master's degree in TESOL in Korea and she was continuing her doctoral studies in Foreign Language Education at the university the study took place. An advanced doctoral student, Haemi was working on her dissertation while taking the course on psycholinguistics. She chose to take the course on

psycholinguistics because she was interested in “meanings, thoughts, and inferences in utterances.” This course was an optional course for her because she had already completed all of her course requirements. She said that because she maybe would teach a course on psycholinguistics after getting her Ph. D, she wanted to learn the way Nancy orchestrated the class as well as updating her knowledge about the field. She also reported that she read all the articles very carefully, without feeling obliged to do so. Haemi had taken courses with Nancy before the semester. She knew some FLE Korean students but did not talk with them very much in or outside the class.

Jason, a 29-year old American male, was a third-year doctoral student in Foreign Language Education. He had his master’s degree in German. He reported that because his master’s program provided a strong background in theoretical areas (language acquisition), he chose a Ph. D. program that would give him more practical pedagogical insights. As for his current disciplinary interests, he said that his passion was still anchored in language acquisition: “One of my passions is looking at cross-linguistic influences, language transfer, and code-switching, and all this stuff.” He chose to take the course on psycholinguistics because psycholinguistics was something he had always wanted to take: “I love classes that make me stretch, make me think about things in new ways, anything that’s dealing with learning and theories of memory and acquisition, I love that. The title, psycholinguistics, just says that to me.” With this high expectation about the course on psycholinguistics, he entered the class and felt a little disappointed with the list of the actual topics the class would cover throughout the semester: “The class is driven by a social constructivist point of view, which I am not very interested in.” In addition, he expressed some concern about the general classroom culture that he perceived as not very conducive to his learning. He was worried that the culture of the class, “having so many teachers in the class and allowing diverse ideas,” would make the class too focused on anecdotal evidence rather than digging into theory. He had not taken courses with Nancy before the semester. As for his social networks in the class, he knew two FLE students (Yang and Daehun). Because he had worked on a collaborative project with Ming in another class in the previous semester, he felt close to Ming.

Yang, a 32-year old Taiwanese female, was a second-year doctoral student in Foreign Language Education. She had a master's degree in English translation and interpretation. Prior to coming to the U. S. to earn her Ph. D. degree in Foreign Language Education, she had taught translation and interpretation at the university in Taiwan for four years. Because she was interested in the processes of simultaneous interpretation and the training of interpreters and translators, Yang chose to take this course with the hope that this course would help her understand the processes of interpretation. Like some FLE students, Yang admitted that she was quite disappointed on the first class to learn that this course would not specifically be targeted at second language acquisition although she was positive that she would gain an important insight into language and thought phenomena. Yang was very familiar with the format of the course because she had taken Nancy's psychology of learning course in the summer. Yang felt that the design of the course was quite similar to the one in summer. She had a perception that "Nancy's class is all about discussion." Despite her belief that she could learn from the discussion, she reported that in oral discussions, she often did not feel like talking because "this class is really big." In addition, she felt that because people were coming from different backgrounds, they might not be interested in her specific question or idea. Therefore, she kept her idea to herself or wrote it down and talked to the teacher afterwards. However, she was very open-minded to other students' contributions to the discussion. She knew some FLE students very well (Daehun and Minho).

Hilda, a 28-year old Mexican American female, was a sixth-year doctoral student in Educational Psychology, Development. As a Mexican American who grew up in a neighborhood in which there were many gangs and marginalized groups, Hilda originally entered the graduate school, thinking that she would look at high school dropouts. Faced with difficulties in getting into the school system, Hilda was thinking of focusing in her dissertation on "looking at students who have come from a neighborhood that had a lot of gangs and who have made it to college." She was interested in marginalized groups, high-risk students. The course on psycholinguistics was Hilda's official last class. She registered for the course very late because she did not know she had to take this course to

fulfill one of her course requirements, and thus she joined the class only in the fourth class session. She expressed that she did not have a teaching background because she had always worked in research projects, so the fact that the class had many teachers made her feel nervous about speaking up in class. Hilda had taken one course with Nancy in 1999. She said that she was very excited about her teaching at the time and she had the same expectation for her teaching in this class. Hilda, in an interview held at the mid-semester, expressed that she did not feel that she was a part of the community yet because she had joined late and because she did not know anyone in this class.

Ming, a 25-year old Taiwanese woman, was a second-year master's student in Educational Psychology. As an English language and literature major, she had taught English at a high school in Taiwan prior to coming to the U. S. to pursue her master's degree. First admitted as a counseling major, she had changed to an academic educational psychology degree in her second year after thinking about pursuing her Ph. D. and figuring that the current major would give her a better chance to explore academic topics. The semester the study took place was Ming's first semester in the new program, and the course on psycholinguistics was the first course she was taking in the new area of study. Ming thought that her background in English language and literature would help her better understand the topics on psycholinguistics although she did not know what the course would specifically be like. On the first day of class, when she looked at the syllabus and reading lists, she said she was shocked because the topics were too foreign to her. She initially felt like a "newcomer" in this class because she was not very familiar with the people including the teacher as well as the course topics. She identified herself as a very quiet person and expressed that it was always hard for her to speak up in any oral class.

Seunghye, a Korean female in her 20s, was a second-year master's student in Foreign Language Education. She had majored in English language and literature in Korea. After working for a publishing company for a few years in Korea, she decided to pursue her master's degree in Foreign Language Education at the university the study took place, with a dual purpose of improving her English in a target culture and getting a

degree so that she could teach English in Korea after graduation. Her major motivation for taking this course on psycholinguistics was to explore topics for her master's thesis that she would be writing in the following semester. At the beginning of the semester, Seunghee was very much excited about all the "interesting" topics to be addressed in the class and all the "exciting" projects and assignments she had to complete throughout the semester. At the same time, she was daunted by the sheer amount of readings for the course. Identifying herself as a "slow and struggling" reader, Seunghee was worried that she might not keep up with all the weekly readings. She was also very self-conscious of her lack of disciplinary knowledge and teaching experiences, which in turn prevented her from speaking up in class. Seunghee felt that not only was she academically "immature," but also she was on the periphery among "highly experienced" classmates. However, she was very positive about her potential "growth" by interacting with her classmates in this course. She had not taken courses with Nancy before. She knew some FLE students (Minho and Daehun) very well. She liked Ming very much in the class and often sat next to her.

Eunjoo, a 29-year old Korean female, was a second-year doctoral student in Early Childhood Education. Eunjoo's undergraduate major was German language and literature. Because she was interested in teaching English, she had completed a TESOL certificate program in Korea. She had come to the U. S. with her husband and earned her master's degree in Curriculum and Instruction at the university where the study took place. She decided to pursue her Ph. D. in the field of Early Childhood Education because she wanted to teach young children regardless of subject. Her research interest was in children's play but she had recently been interested in children's second language acquisition. She chose to take the course on psycholinguistics with the hope that this course would help her develop her new research interest. Eunjoo admitted that at first the course title was not appealing to her because she thought that it would be too much of a linguistics course normally she did not want to take. She was happy about the actual course topics because "it is about language learning and teaching in context." She said that she had heard so many good things about Nancy from other students and always

wanted to take her course. An initial interview with her revealed that Eunjoo was also happy about the way Nancy orchestrated the class discussion. She said that in most of the courses she had taken in Early Childhood Education, the professors generally refrained from voicing their opinions about the topics: “They just wanted the students to develop their own perspectives on the topics in the process of discussing among themselves.” In those courses she did not get the guidance from the professor necessary to understand the readings. But in this course, she felt that Nancy provided a necessary framework within which she could understand the readings. She did not know many students in the class. She felt different from other students because she was the only Early Childhood Education major.

### **The Students’ Responses to the Diversity of the Class**

The profiles I have just presented showed that the students differed in goals and directions they initially set out for the class as much as they did in the cultural and educational backgrounds they brought to the class. Seen from a Bakhtinian perspective, the students’ different backgrounds might have initially set a stage for potential conflicts among voices in the class. For Bakhtin, in contrast to the univocal function of a single, shared, homogeneous perspective, the function of “difference” tends toward dialogism, conflict among voices, and new understanding and learning. An important question here is whether the students themselves perceived the diversity as conducive to their development.

In fact, the students generally responded positively to the effect of the diversity of the student backgrounds on their overall learning processes in the class. For example, Kelly showed an initial high expectation of learning opportunities that the students’ diverse backgrounds would bring to the class, and Ali, in his reflective essay, commented on how the diversity of the student composition actually enriched the class in terms of the provision of new perspectives and insights.

I think the diversity of student backgrounds is what’s good about this class. I always learn more when talking with people with different perspectives. So when

I listen to other people talking in the classroom, I think that I benefit from that kind of learning. When you take a class with people from your discipline, you hear them talk all the time, and they hear you talk all the time. Everybody knows in Language and Literacy that I was a speech pathologist. Everybody knows because I say it all the time. But I notice that of course people in the discipline like educational psychology, you are interested in a lot of the same things and I think that just people who, because you have more knowledge about second language learning, about biliteracy, and about CMC, I think that's, not only getting from the teacher, getting from other students. Just like when Daehun talks about what books he's reading, I think it's just good to hear other people. (Kelly, Background Interview, September 24)

The students came from different areas of specialization, which I believe was a challenge to the instructor. Yet she succeeded in orchestrating this diversified group in an effective way. Thus where one came from was not a drawback; on the contrary it was an enrichment of the class in terms of the provision of new perspectives and insights. Moreover, each student got something, if not many, related to his or her area of interest. (Ali, Self-reflective Essay)

However, some students raised a voice of concern that the diversity might negatively influence the quality of the interaction in class. Jason initially raised this concern in an interview conducted at the beginning of the semester and Alicia confirmed Jason's concern in her self-reflective essay submitted at the end of the semester.

Because we have different backgrounds in the classroom and not everyone is coming from research theoretically-driven backgrounds, we are not gonna get the in-depth psycholinguistic ideas I really want to get. Maybe we will. Maybe we will. But the fact that the class is so big makes that hard too. My other class had seven people, so we had a really deep discussion. To her credit, Nancy likes to gear the class where everyone's following. You know, I want to get into the real meat of the materials, but there's people who aren't getting it. So we have to take a few steps back in order to make sure they follow, whereas those who are really following it are kind of left hanging, not having a chance to go farther with it. That's what I fear. (Jason, Background Interview, September 20)

The ethnic diversity and variance in departments probably influenced the overall oral discussion. ... I began to label each student with his or her background experience in correlation with my own. Therefore, when certain students outside my department asked a question, I dismissed the information from my mind. For example, I distinctly recall a student from another department talking about the term register. Register was an unfamiliar term for me. It seemed irrelevant since it was not a common term in my field. Thus, I unintentionally tuned out the answer.



The relevance of the discussion with personal connections to my field greatly impacted my attention and learning. (Alicia, Self-reflective Essay)

Seen from the comments, one can get the impression that for certain students, the diversity of the students' backgrounds was perceived to be a drawback to their learning, especially when the students could not see the relevance of the other students' input to their disciplinary knowledge or research interest.

Meanwhile, in spite of differences in the students' backgrounds, interests, goals, and directions, all students were doing the same kind of activities as part of their course requirements in this class. In part by engaging in social practices embedded in the class, the students were beginning to understand how certain values and practices from the field had influenced the kind of psycholinguistics they were learning, to develop a feeling for what issues are addressed in the field, and to develop a language that allowed them to communicate, if not with all psycholinguists, at least with certain subcommunities of them. However, the students' responses to the values and practices embedded in the class were as diverse as they came from.

Let us then turn to the description of the disciplinary community and social practices embedded in the community (as portrayed in the teacher's beliefs, her choice of readings, assignments, and classroom speech activities) coupled with the analysis of the students' initial perceptions and on-going, end-of-the-semester evaluations on the values embedded in this sociocultural context. An important question addressed in the next sections is whether the classroom culture actually provided the students with "sociocultural and cognitive spaces where multiple voices and multiple ways of voicing are welcomed" (Freedman, 1995, p. 91) so that new understanding and learning could grow out of the multivoicedness in dialogic interactions.

### **The Course on Psycholinguistics**

The course on psycholinguistics was a graduate seminar offered in the department of Educational Psychology. It was designed to introduce the students to the discipline that

is focused on understanding the whole phenomenon of language and thought, and to help the students form a deep appreciation for the psycholinguistic phenomenon that they experience in their everyday lives.

### **How the Teacher Designed the Course and Chose Course Themes**

The broad disciplinary community might be described as one influenced by the values and practices of the field of education. The teacher, Nancy, perceived the disciplinary community as a whole as very open and flexible especially in terms of choosing content and developing instructional strategies: “We are so free to do it whichever way we like. It is very much a matter of professional judgment on my individual part to have invented the course the way that it has developed” (Background Interview, October 9).

Without having strict requirements or guidelines dictated from above, from the institution or from the department, Nancy reported that her philosophy of the instructional process had been very much affected by debates within the discipline, such as those in learning theory. She was committed to a particular kind of educational philosophy, that is, social constructivist views of learning, especially the views on how people learn from language. Nancy’s philosophy was most clearly manifested in her use of “text” as a focal classroom event for the students to express themselves and explore ideas and concepts about psycholinguistics. Nancy wanted the students to experience “text” as a phenomenon that results from the socially negotiated transaction between knowledge systems. In her syllabus, for instance, Nancy stated:

How will you come to experience text as a socially negotiated transaction phenomenon? The best way I know to produce that effect is to have you become authors and speakers yourselves, to have you write often and to have you find it easy to participate in class, whether we are in face-to-face format or online. In fact, in this course, you will probably spend as many hours writing as you will reading. Similarly, class time will allow for classroom discussion. In this way, I hope you will come to see that text, oral or written, is not a final repository of knowledge but merely a record of one construction that an author/speaker has

made on his/her current understanding negotiated to reflect the social/contextual factors that are inherent.

Nancy's desire for the students to experience text as negotiation of meaning was also revealed in her alleged prejudice against using textbooks for the class and her preference for having the students read actual authors in their own words.

There's something different about meeting authors in their own words. If they are gonna be familiar with the actual discipline about psycholinguistics or about psychology of language learning, I think you need to read the actual authors. I even have this prejudice against textbooks for undergraduate classes. I just cannot choose a textbook for my students. I feel like I'm not serving them well if I choose a textbook. (Background Interview, October 9)

With that rationale behind her, Nancy selected readings for the class taken from journals and edited volumes, which broke down roughly into four major themes that were covered over 13 days of seminar discussions with some overlap.

The themes were:

1. Cognition and Language
2. Language Acquisition
3. Oral language and Classroom Talk
4. Written Language: Comprehension and Production

The course started off with an introduction to the theoretical and philosophical foundations of the relationships between language and cognition, drawing on different schools of thought in psychology such as behaviorism, cognitivism, constructivism, and social constructivism. The course then touched on how people acquire a language and what they really learn when they learn a specific language.

The course next proceeded to examine oral language use in natural settings and discuss how it is similar to and/or different from classroom talk. Here, the focus was on conversational contracts in learning environments, Vygotskian views of knowledge acquisition and language use, and effects of language on thinking. The course then moved on to discuss written language comprehension and production. Questions such as what is "text" were addressed and then reading and writing as processes were discussed

with a focus on how these processes intersected with cognitive, affective, and cultural domains.

In organizing these themes, the teacher planned to cover different theoretical perspectives on language and thought in the early stage of the course, followed by a review of more practical teaching related issues (e.g., dialogic classroom, writing practices at school). Nancy also made a special effort to reach every student's discipline at some plane by covering issues involving young children as well as adult learners. All assignments and class discussions were grounded in these themes as the teacher attempted to synthesize and relate the topics to the students' interest in learning and teaching, which will be addressed in the following sections in great detail.

### **The Students' Responses to the Course Themes**

Having examined the teacher's instructional philosophy, goals for the class, and major themes of the class, it would be important at this point to see how the teacher's choice of the themes for the class was actually perceived and evaluated by the students. In this regard, I will present some of the students' perceptions and evaluations of the class, which were revealed in one of the final-exam essay questions about what this course is all about. The last question on the test asked the students to reflect on their experience in this class:

Imagine that you are describing this course to someone you know and you are trying to say what it was like. What would be, for you, the one overarching construct that would capture what the course was about and what would be a good metaphor for what the course was like as an experience. Explain. In a sense, what I am asking you to do in this question is to fill in the blanks in the following imaginary utterances:

"Green's 2002 fall course on Psycholinguistics was all about \_\_\_\_ (a) \_\_\_\_\_. The course felt like \_\_\_\_ (b) \_\_\_\_ (or "I experienced the course as if \_\_\_\_\_.") Here's why I say this: \_\_\_\_ (c) \_\_\_\_\_."

By looking at the students' responses to this question, one can get a sense of how the students actually understood the topics, appropriating (or resisting) them in terms of

the students' own goals for the class, relevance of the themes to their disciplinary interests or life experiences, and their initial degree of familiarity with the topics.

For Ali who initially reported that he took the course on psycholinguistics because it was a degree requirement and his goal for the course was just to get a credit on his program of work, the course offered him more than what he initially expected: He returned from a pleasant trip to “many extraordinary sites and scenes” around the field of psycholinguistics with “new discovery” even though he hesitantly embarked on the trip “with the slightest intention to learn from it.” Ali described this as follows:

Green's 2002 fall course on Psycholinguistics was like a tour in a magnificent location that has many extraordinary sites and scenes. The tour had many different stops. On each the guide briefs the tourists on that site or location, listens to their input and comments and then lets them free to their imagination. How much do these tourists get from the tour? What did they learn? This is the big question. Nonetheless, none, I believe, has left with nothing. In fact all of them should have learned many things and enjoyed many scenes and sites. This is my Psycholinguistics class. ... Though the course is assumed to be an introduction to this magnificent field, the instructor was superbly successful in doing more than an introduction. In fact the course taught the students most of, if not all, what they need to know about this area. Not only did the course offer the theoretical and necessary background for each topic, but it also provided the empirical studies that supported those theories and hypotheses. ... This course was useful, rich in knowledge it provided, enlightening and insightful. It was involving and intriguing. Even if one goes to that class with the slightest intention to learn from it, he or she will inevitably learn something.

For Ming who initially felt like a total stranger to the field and to whom the course topics came as a shock, the course offered her a chance to familiarize herself with the field that she ultimately wanted to be a part of.

Nancy's 2002 fall course on Psycholinguistics was all about the use of language, learning, and cognition process. We learn from theories of learning and information processes (behavior point of view, constructive point of view, to social-constructive point of view), whether thought is different from language, language acquisition, classroom talk, to the production and comprehension of languages, including oral, reading, and writing. We covered motivation, emotion, involvement in learning and reading, and we discussed the culture influences as well. We read about 44 articles, mostly very recent ones (I love them!). ... I experienced the course as if I were sailing on the sea. I am a slow reader, having some sort of language barrier (as an international student), and I guess my

background knowledge about cognition psychology was not firm enough (I hadn't touched this area after my introduction to psychology class in college), so I sometimes found myself lost in some of the journal articles and had trouble catching up, especially in the beginning of the semester. However, instead of feeling discouraged, somehow, whenever I read an article that I could understand, or whenever I went to the class, there was always a voice speaking softly in my mind, "This is amazing! I want to learn more. I want to know that!" It was just like sailing on the sea, even though I need to row hardly to go over the tide, the scene there is so beautiful that I never think of going back but only push myself to go further and further. I have made up my mind to explore more in learning and cognition area, and I feel so grateful and happy that I have taken this class.

For Rubin who had experienced many different disciplinary communities before venturing into the field of educational psychology and initially faced difficulties in understanding the discourse used in this particular field of study, this course and the topics offered him a chance to think of the role of language as a mediational tool.

My personal understanding of the overarching theme of Nancy's fall 2002 course on Psycholinguistics would have to be the myriad ways in which language becomes the mediational means between individuals. Language mediates cognition, affect, motivation, emotion, cultural and social structures within and between different discourse communities and individuals. Language is portrayed in the class as constructing meaning in written and oral forms, and experienced in synchronous and asynchronous discussions in classroom and computer assisted discussions. I developed a new sense of appreciation for the complexities of language, especially in its common usage

For Pei whose goal for the course was to "experience something new," the course themes provided an opportunity to see her everyday language use she took for granted in a new light in the process of engaging in the course topics.

Language is something I take so much for granted. I use it everyday. In fact, I use more than one language almost everyday, not counting computer languages. I do it so effortlessly most of the time, sometimes even without awareness (I talk even when I am asleep, I was told). I never thought about what functions language provided for my mind, for my thinking – what is happening to my thinking when I read or write? What is in the background when I interpret or find meanings in what I heard or read? What lead to learning through dialogues? Although I have not grasped or constructed in depth of the words presented in class, I have been brought to the awareness of the functions language provided for my mental being.

For Yang who chose to take the course to improve her teaching practices with a sound basis of theory of language learning and teaching, the class themes served as an arena in which she could reexamine her own learning and teaching and envision herself as more informed future teacher.

This course felt like I was compelled to reexamined how I learned to talk, listen, read, and write and how I could best facilitate my students' (and my child's) development of these abilities. Three aspects involved in the language and thought interaction have been covered in this class: cognition, emotion, and socio-culture. Cognition is the underlying foundation necessary for any language skill to develop in the first place. But beyond that, it is the emotional and socio-cultural aspects of language that explain the difference we see among people. It is clear that the focus of this class was on education. I either learned about a construct from a classroom study or eventually was led to the application of a construct in the classroom. ... The ultimate test of my learning in this class will be in my future classroom.

Thus far, from the students' responses to the course and course themes, one can see that as the teacher had expected, the students left the class with something at hand by engaging with the topics the teacher chose for the students. The students were introduced to the field by meeting the actual authors (44 articles) and getting familiar with the concepts and constructs. In addition, they learned to compare the discourses of various disciplinary communities they had been previously exposed to with that of the new disciplinary community they encountered in this class. They were brought to a critical awareness of their own everyday language use that had previously been taken for granted. They also had a chance to reflect on their own learning and teaching practices in light of the constructs they read in the class.

However, one should note that the themes for the class were not always appropriated into the students' conceptual systems with ease. Yiping described how differently she reacted as she traversed on various topics of the course, depending on how much she could enter into the authors' world, how relevant she perceived the topics to be to her life, how emotionally attached she became to the topics, etc.

The course felt like taking a spa in hot pool, warm pool and cold pool. Here's why I say this: Sometimes I felt like immersing in the cold pool because I found it was hard to enter into some "textual space" with certain authors (e.g., Shotter's

Dialogical psychology) or couldn't see any importance of talking some issues and thus felt the coldness of the course. Yet another time I felt hot when I read some articles which were really relevant to my experiences or when I hold a strong disagreement with the authors' points. Sometimes I felt soaking in the warm water because some issues or topics we talked really made me moved and I liked them very much thus I felt warm.

At times when the students found their expectations and goals for the course did not completely match the actual topics covered in the course, they tended not to enjoy the topics thoroughly. For example, Jason, who entered with an expectation that the class would focus on individual meaning-making processes, found the class governed by social constructivism and reported that he tended to "resist new foods a little" although he ultimately sampled a little bit of everything.

This class was like a picnic, where I came expecting certain "traditional" fare and found something altogether different. I tend to resist new foods a little. But not wanting to leave hungry, I decided that I would have to try a little of everything. ... I anticipated that this class would look a little deeper into the cognitive structures and processes of an individual, much like a neuro-linguistics class I am aware of but was never able to take. Instead, I found a class on how social constructs influence meaning construction. It was a construct wherein I was a complete novice. As such, I learned quite a bit both about socio-constructivism and moreover about fields – such as reading comprehension – that I have never previously studied. ... If you're not fond of social-constructivist theory, beware: the course is governed by that construct

For another student, Alicia, her perception that she was too familiar with the themes of the course led her not to engage fully in the themes because the ideas felt like an "old news" to her.

The majority of the content and themes closely paralleled my Language and Literacy background. I felt that I had been repeatedly exposed to many of the basic foundations of the course. For example, having a Bachelor degree in Early Childhood Education and presently completing my Masters degree in Language and Literacy, I have a strong foundation in literacy acquisition. These ideas were old news to me. In my head I was saying, "I know this. Can't you tell me something more?" Therefore, when newcomers to the psychological field asked simplistic, basic questions concerning these concepts, I tended to roll my eyes and groan.



## **Assignments and Forms of Evaluation**

Having discussed the teacher's instructional philosophy, her goals for the course, and her choice of class themes coupled with the students' responses to them, I will now turn to another important component that formed this particular classroom culture: assignments and forms of evaluation. The class had three major assignments: a psycholinguistic project, take-home essay exams, and two self-analysis papers, one of oral comprehension and a second of written discussion. The class assignments in general required the students to analyze and apply current theory to learning/teaching situations or episodes they observed in their daily lives or reflectively to their own learning in this class. The purpose of these exercises was to encourage the students to reflect on their everyday language use and to engage with the discourse of the field that was the goal of the course. Nancy described her goals for the assignments as follows:

I do want them [the students] to, it sort of goes back to my big overarching goals, you know, those two goals, wanting them to appreciate language, and then I want them to appreciate what these authors in the field are saying about language. So all of my assignments are about that. I want them to, for example, collect psycholinguistic examples. You know, in some ways, it doesn't matter to me what they write in the assignments. It's the process of tuning your ear, and then looking at your samples, and then going, "Ha, look at that. This is exactly what Grice is talking about. It's the quantity maxim." If they would just make that realization, they have completely fulfilled my expectations for that assignment. So I try to come up with assignments that would make them reflect on language, or I try to ask them questions on the exams that make them go back to the readings so that they'll say, "Okay. So, what did Bruner say about this?" and see and synthesize what these authors were trying to say. (Background Interview, Oct 10)

### **Psycholinguistic Project**

The students had one psycholinguistic project to complete before the semester ended. In this semester-long project, the students observed the language-thought interaction informally but systematically, with the aim of recording one or more of the phenomena they were discussing in class and analyzing the samples through the lens of

the construct/theory that the student chose to explain the phenomenon. The purpose of this exercise was to encourage the students to be aware and appreciative of the multitude of ways of expressing a particular meaning and of the nearly infinite nuances of interpretation that can result when mind meets words. As a warm-up practice, students were asked to keep a daily journal of psycholinguistic examples and share any good examples with the class. The psycholinguistic example sharing exercise constituted an integral part of the classroom routine at least for the first half of the course. Towards the end of the semester, the students submitted a draft of their report and Nancy formed groups of three to four people who had conducted similar projects and e-mailed the drafts back out to each of the students in the group. On the last class day, the small groups met together to discuss their reactions to each other's papers.

### **Take-Home Essay Exams**

The students had two take-home exams that consisted of short-answer essay questions directing the students to integrate and synthesize the information discussed in class and in the readings. The first exam was handed out mid-semester. A mastery-option retest was offered for the first exam if students wanted a second chance to improve on the exam. The second take-home exam was handed out at the end of the semester. The exam questions usually took the following form:

What is meant by TEXT? Present the points of view of at least two of our authors and then present YOUR currently favored way of thinking about text. (Final Exam, Q3)

Some of the questions asked the students to revisit the classroom activities they had just conducted with an eye towards identifying issues of their interest:

Find a comment that one of your classmates or I made from any of the three written discussions we have had so far. Choose from a group in which you were NOT a member. The kind of comment I would like you to choose is one that presents a point of argument, an explanation, an introduction of an idea or term from our readings. Write the comment down. Explain what you think the author of the message meant and then respond to the comment (by "respond" I mean for you to argue with it (and say why), to disagree, to give an example from your

personal experience, something that elaborates on the comment and that might have been posted by you if you had been in that group's discussion). In terms of the format, this question should have three parts: the comment, your explication of the message, and your response to it. (Mid-term Exam, Q3)

### **Self-analysis of Oral Comprehension and Written Discussion**

The analysis of oral comprehension was meant to engage the students in an observation of their own reaction to the language-thought interaction in a learning situation, with them as learners in this course. The students were asked to choose a situation that started as an initial confusion/misunderstanding and ended with some sort of resolution during any in-class oral discussion. They were to write an informal but systematic analysis of what was going on with them in terms of causing them difficulty or in terms of helping them understand, referring to any kind of affective reaction that was influencing them, and looking out for difficulties that arose because of cultural factors. By engaging in this assignment, students were expected to relate directly what they experienced in oral discussion to one or more of the central themes of the class.

The purpose of analysis of written discussion was to make students reflect on what happened to them in written discussion that made use of linked, real-time, synchronous computer-mediated interactions and in asynchronous discussion on Blackboard. In this self-reflective analysis exercise, the students were asked to describe the kind of learning they experienced, and the kind of linguistic, cognitive, affective, social, and cultural reactions the change to a written interaction pattern engendered in them.

### **The Students' Initial Responses to the Assignments**

The students in general had a clear idea of what purposes the teacher had for these assignments even though the assignments were new to some students. The following students who had not taken courses with Nancy before the semester commented on how they perceived the assignments. Notice that even at this early stage of the course when

the initial background interviews were held, the students could successfully guess what the teacher wanted them to achieve by engaging in the assignments.

I guess all the assignments are different because you are looking for different things. Psycholinguistics journal is definitely something I haven't done before. So it's a new way to look at things, keeping a notebook and thinking, "Okay, now what is it?," just being aware of something new. I like the way it's a semester-long project because at the beginning you get to think and you are already providing the class and learn. And the analysis of oral comprehension, it's a different way to take on that assignment. We have to analyze our own. That's a different way. I haven't done before. It's a kind of interesting take on that analyzing stuff because you are always analyzing other people's work or kids' work, so looking back on yourself sometimes is kind of good. (Alicia, Background Interview, September 18)

I have not had very much experience with classroom assignments, because this is my second year. So far I'm used to more formal kinds of assignments. But I have noticed that she is not so much interested in "Can you turn in a pretty paper?" but "Can I follow your thought processes in your paper?," "Can I see what you have learned as a student in whatever you turned in?" And that's, to me, very rewarding and challenging, but motivating. (Morgan, Background Interview, September 19)

I think in these assignments we have to delve deeper into a topic, kind of reflecting upon ourselves during the research. (Anne, Background Interview, September 13)

I think she expects that we will do some thinking and make that clear in our writing and incorporate ideas we talked about in class. I think her goal is that we're gonna start looking at things more in a research-based way, based on all kinds of readings she is giving us and things she is talking to us about. So I think that she wants to see that we find the meaning, that this is meaningful, and how it is related to our life. So we'll see the value in it. I'm not too concerned with that she is judging the actual writing too much. I don't think she emphasizes that too much. I think she is emphasizing more on meaning, although I think there's a level of expectation of writing quality in a graduate course. (Mary, Background Interview, September 16)

I would imagine that the goal of that oral analysis for me is to follow my progression, misunderstanding, and understanding, how I work through that. I guess I want to think about in terms of psycholinguistics, what processes we go through, just listening and trying to make meaning. The other one, the psycholinguistic project, I'm not sure yet. I guess it's just to think about how we

use language, how language affects us on a daily basis. (Vivien, Background Interview, September 20)

I imagine that it must really be about more of the process than the product, because she has students of all different ability levels, especially the writing of English. And I imagine that she will look for more solid knowledge and integration of themes more than style or perfect grammar and spelling. I think that's pretty refreshing because some professors are really all about form, more about form than it is about content. So that will be interesting to write for her. I have never done that before. (Kelly, Background Interview, September 23)

Other students who had already taken courses with Nancy before the semester could not only adequately guess the purpose of the assignments but also decide what styles she would prefer, showing a high level of comfort with the assignments, despite the fact that there were new projects in this course that had not been assigned in Nancy's previous courses.

I think, well, in the course in summer, some assignments were very similar to the ones we have this semester. The content should be like the one generated from my own digestion. I think she expects students to digest what's in the journal article or in the class discussion. And then based on your understanding, you are supposed to produce your own reaction and response. I think she likes that kind of style. (Minho, Background Interview, September 10)

I think she will focus more on ideas, less on form. So I'll probably just write informal way. I would not pay too much attention to how I present my ideas. Instead, I'll just concentrate on my ideas. Ideas all matter in these assignments. (Yang, Background Interview, September 18)

She definitely doesn't care about grammar in our assignments. She wants to see how we understand the topics. The kind of writing that reflects my own perspective on the issues. Because I know how she will grade our paper, I feel pretty comfortable. On the other hand, that's the reason that I feel I need to do it better. (Yujin, Background Interview, September 13)

There were, however, other students who reported that they had no clue as to how they would go about doing the assignments either because they had not been exposed to the kinds of assignments in their previous graduate courses or because they could not figure out exactly what the assignments were about. For these students, a certain degree

of anxiety about not knowing exactly how to do the assignments was mixed with a feeling of excitement about doing something new.

The assignments are quite different. You know, most of the courses I took were quantitative courses, so the assignments were like paper. We needed to analyze the paper. But, I think this is to apply the theory into real-life situations and analyze what really happened. For me it is very hard to do it. I haven't done this before. For example, about the psycholinguistic example, when she said, "Not a book drop," I found one "Not for the trash." Yes, it's a similar example. But I don't really know how to do the project. I felt really nervous because she said we need to find one example every day. And I was asking to myself, "Is this an example?" I wondered if it is a psycholinguistic example or it is just because of the lack of my language. (Ming, Background Interview, September 16)

I feel the assignments from Nancy are harder than I expected. For example, the psycholinguistic project, I am still troubling with the definition of what is a psycholinguistic example. Sometimes I feel everything is psycholinguistic example. That depends on how you analyze them. So, sometimes I feel confused when Nancy asks us to share our examples. ... I think her purpose is to make us more sensitive to day-to-day language. Maybe by the time I finish the assignments, I can be more sensitive to everyday language. (Yiping, Background Interview, September 16)

This is very difficult, I mean the assignments. This is the first time somebody asks me to do this kind of assignment. I'll probably learn something new at the end. I think that the fact is that it is different is interesting. Something new that you will experience. Hopefully I will learn something from this new assignment. (Ali, Background Interview, September, 23)

### **The Students' Eventual Learning Experiences with the Assignments**

Although I did not get a chance to ask directly the students what the assignments were like as an experience, I did get some feedback on that from the students' responses to the final essay exam question #7 about what this course on psycholinguistics is all about. The students in general reacted positively to the explicit and implicit values that were embedded in these assignments, emphasizing the effect of doing the assignments on their critical reflection on themselves as a learner, teacher, and everyday language user.

The course itself felt like looking at myself in the mirror or in an old photograph and noticing different things about myself or the environment that I had not noticed before. I say this because there was a lot of self-reflection in this class. We were directly asked to self-reflect on our experiences in the computer-mediated discussions and the oral discussions in class, but I also found myself reflecting on how all of the topics we discussed or read about relate to me. We all experience language every day. We all learned to speak, read, and write at one point in our lives, some of us more than once in different languages. It was really interesting to study each of these things, and then apply them to myself. I started noticing psycholinguistic examples all around me and even thought of examples that happened a long time ago that applied to what we were discussing at the moment. It was particularly interesting to be placed in environments where we could analyze what happens linguistically in these environments! (Stacy)

The assignments were difficult but I strongly believe that they helped me have a better understanding of what each article is about and I could think about those articles in close relation to what goes on in my life. In particular, the psycholinguistic example project helped me have a critical eye to view and appreciate what happens around me is full of cases to which what I learned from the course can be applied. In a nutshell, I could make connection the course into my daily life. (Minho)

I learned to pay attention to language around me, as if any ordinary utterance or printed words can make a psycholinguistic project if I look close enough. (Yang)

### **Classroom Speech Activities**

Let us now turn to the most salient aspect of social practices the students in this course engaged in: classroom speech activities. The class had three major kinds of speech activities throughout the semester: oral speech activities, synchronous CMC activities, and asynchronous CMC activities.

As the most predominant classroom routine, the oral seminar met once a week on Thursdays for three-hours from 1 to 4. Three times during the semester, on Sep. 12, Sep. 19, and Oct. 31, the class broke midway and the students went to a computer lab where they continued the conversation in written format using the Daedalus Interchange, a real-time, synchronous local-network system for carrying on group discussion.

In addition, for two particular time periods during the semester (for a time period on Oct. 3-4 and on Nov. 14-15), the students participated in asynchronous discussions on Blackboard. The students did not have to come to campus so long as they could access the Internet on those two days.

In orchestrating all the classroom activities, the teacher wanted the class environment to be friendly and casual so that the students' voices are encouraged in a safe environment. As Nancy commented:

The fact that I'm such a believer or a lover of those social constructivist points of view, that has made me try to have it that the students' voices are encouraged and in fact let them be the vehicle of teaching. It's hard to do, because I know they are reluctant, and mostly I know about that because I have done research on how they feel about talking, not in front of me, but in front of each other. So I know they have sort of reluctance to say anything out loud in class. At least that's a general rule, but I try to make it that it will be possible for them and that I even try to encourage them to do. (Background Interview, October 9)

Having learned that oral discussion, however hard she tried to encourage the students' voices in the class, had its limitations, Nancy introduced CMC as another avenue in which the students' voices can be heard. Nancy described this as follows:

It had to do with me coming to a belief partly theoretically driven and from my readings. So it's part of an answer to your question, "What of my philosophy dictates how I teach the class?," those socioconstructivist beliefs. One of the reasons I wanted to use CMC is the fact that the students' voices would be more equal to mine, so both synchronous and asynchronous does that. ... The purpose is related to my belief that knowledge is created by socially negotiated meaning, and you could do that simply by listening to me and you could do that simply by reading the articles. But here's this other avenue that even makes that more likely. That is, when you read because you're gonna write, and you write knowing that others will respond, then your reading will be affected, the writing will be affected. And then when you see what someone respond to what you have written, you now think differently about what you wrote and what you read. So you get into this wonderful transformative power of even as you read, thinking ahead, "What will others be thinking of exactly the same thing that I'm reading right now?" It sort of makes the reading more engaging, I think, engaging now not just in the sense of it's more motivating, it's sort of like, it's more deeper, the reading is deeper because you're already imagining how others will respond to it, you are already imagining what you are going to write about it. It's not just reading. You are reading to write and then you are writing to get a response. So you are reading



to get a response, and that just makes the learning deeper. (Background Interview, October 9)

With this rationale, Nancy had used the synchronous CMC (Daedalus Interchange) for several years since 1994 as part of her teaching instruction. She reported an appreciation for the alternative format of discussion in which the students participated more and engaged in text-based discussion without her guiding control and influence. The teacher also appreciated the textualized nature of the CMC talk and frequently asked the students to refer to the CMC exchange to cite examples related to the constructs they were discussing. The printed versions of the conversations served for this purpose and offered the students an opportunity to reflect on their own learning.

For Nancy, the asynchronous CMC was relatively new. Nancy was very excited about having discussions on this medium in this class.

The asynchronous bulletin board way of having CMC is relatively new to me. It's more like three years old or something like that. At first, I thought I wouldn't like it, because it just doesn't have that immediate bombardment of lots of ideas and it's sort of exciting to be in a synchronous discussion. At first I thought asynchronous would be boring. One long essay, another long essay, another long essay, boring. But people write such wonderful things on the asynchronous discussion. I have to actually tell myself, "Do not respond." I even sometimes write a comment, "Okay, I'm not gonna post it. I'm gonna erase it." I have to say that, because I would be writing to everybody and then I would not be doing what I'm hoping it will do, which is to make my voice a little bit less and everybody else's voice more powerful. And the reason I want to respond to everyone is that each person says great things. They just say wonderful things. They just beg me to respond to them. So I really have to control myself. (Background Interview, October 9)

In accordance with the teacher's beliefs, some students valued each format of the speech activities as different avenues for creating knowledge, as evidenced in the students' responses to essay question #7 on what this course was all about:

The practical tasks that students were required to do were another source of enjoyment and knowledge. The class encompassed in-class and on line discussions, synchronous and asynchronous and oral and written. Students were allowed and encouraged to reflect and take part in decision making when it came to the organization of those tasks. Each student had almost dealt with every other student in the class, something that does not usually occur in classrooms. (Ali)

Whether we were discussing a topic in class, or sharing our thoughts in synchronous and asynchronous discussions, we had the opportunity to connect to the members of our class and to share and reflect upon each other's comments in such a way that the language we used, both written and oral, connected our thoughts. (Rita)

The format of this class was a learning experience in its own right. Reading on my own, participating in oral discussions in class, participating in synchronous and asynchronous written discussions on line, and working on the assignments have all made different contributions to my learning. (Yang)

However, for many students, as they engaged in the different kinds of speech activities throughout the semester, they responded differently to each form of talk. In what follows, I will present a description of each activity in detail, followed by a discussion of how the students initially responded to each speech activity and with what outcomes they experienced from the activities at the end of the semester.

### **Oral Speech Activity**

The oral discussion of the class was held in a classroom with the students and the teacher sitting around a table facing each other. Typically, class discussion focused on the readings for the day, the assignments (sharing of psycholinguistic examples), and the print-out from the previous week's CMC discussion.

As the students walked into the classroom, they would talk amongst themselves while waiting for others to arrive. At a certain point, the teacher would call the class to order and class would begin. As a way of encouraging student talk, she organized her class physically so that the students faced each other and talked to each other as well as talking to her.

Another way to encourage the students' feeling of "we are in this together" on a journey of trying to understand the topic of psycholinguistics, Nancy, on the first class session, made the students introduce themselves to the class to let them "know each other as a fellow journeyer on this trip." After a round of the students' brief introductions about

their name, department, and year of study, and research interest, Nancy advised the students that they should not form the impression that there is a big difference between master's students and doctoral students in terms of a particular comment they make in the class because she felt there is no big difference. She further advised that taking an open stance towards each other's contribution will ultimately enrich the class: "For our own benefits as learners of these wonderful topics, the best way to think of them is we are going to learn together and yes, it's the sort of open stance." This event on the first class day affected some students greatly on their interactions with other students throughout the semester. One student said how Nancy's comment affected her subsequent oral discussion practices especially in terms of listening to others. In her interview, Yang described this as follows:

What Dr. Green said on our first class also influenced my thinking, because she kind of understands what we think. She knew that if we feel that we are kind of inadequate, we will be afraid to speak and don't want to look bad in front of the whole class. But the way she puts it is that everyone can contribute, "Even if you don't understand much and even if you ask a very stupid question, it will prompt other students to think, so this is another way of contributing to the class." So I think the talk she gave in our first class was very good. (Discourse-based Interview, November 19)

The class typically started by Nancy soliciting the students' psycholinguistic examples by asking questions such as "What are some of the interesting psycholinguistic examples that you encountered this week?" and usually three to five students would bring up their examples and shared them with the whole class. After having warmed up with psycholinguistic examples, the class got down to "serious" business. Nancy asked the students to focus on the readings for the day. This was generally achieved by asking questions related to the readings such as, "What did you think of the readings for the day?" or by simply saying what she wanted the students to think about the readings, which often led to mini-lectures about the whole framework for the readings. The following is one example of her initiating a topic for the class:

What I want us to continue on today discussing then is this whole big issue of the language-thought relationship. What we did last week was to discuss, what we talked about last week was cognition, thought, descriptions of how the mind

works. ... So, now what we want to talk about is the language part, what is the nature of the language. One of the things that I was hoping would get accomplished with the readings that I had assigned is that you would see in what these people are writing a consideration of the nature of the language. ... (Nancy's talk continues for 10 minutes) (Nancy, Oral Discussion, September 12)

Nancy's desire to provide a framework that should help the students understand the readings often made Nancy set aside a portion of oral class time for mini-lectures.

If they [the students] don't understand the particulars of the article, at least they appreciate what that article is supposed to be doing in this framework. Then they can go back to read the article with a sort of sense of its position. So I use the lecture to provide that kind of information. (Background Interview, October 9)

For some students who needed the teacher's strong scaffolding in understanding articles, the lecture time was a source of joy, as Eunjoo commented in her self-reflective essay:

Sometimes, your readings could be difficult to understand but you don't need to worry about it because during each class, Dr. Green will cover each reading one by one and help you to find main point of each reading.

The teacher generally refrained from formal lectures, but as such, did, on occasion, talk at length about certain topics. Eventually, however, she would turn the conversation over to the students and solicit discussion. Sometimes the teacher would call on students as they raised their hands, other times the students would volunteer responses without being called on.

This kind of whole-class oral speech activity continued throughout the semester with some variations. Only once during the semester, the students were divided into small groups to meet with the previous week's asynchronous online group members and share their experiences with the discussion. During this small-group activity, the teacher walked about the room listening to the students' group efforts. After working in groups, the class came together again to share their ideas and feelings generated from the small group meeting.

The fact that the class was relatively large with 23 students for a graduate seminar made it harder to encourage student talk. Despite her efforts to get the students to talk in

the whole-class oral speech activity, the oral discussion was still dominated by the teacher. Some students did not see it as dominated by the teacher, though.

I don't think she is dominating the discussion in the class. The topic itself requires students to have deeper thought because some of the articles, as she said in the previous class, are very difficult for students to understand. So, you know, it might be very difficult to express students' thought about the topic. Sometimes when students say something in class, I found their comments are not related to the topic. Rather it is a general description of their personal experience, but somehow it might be related to the topic itself. Whatever students say, Dr. Green is always kind of open to those comments. And based on the students' comments, she's always leading the discussion to the way she wants. So I think she talks a lot, but I like that. (Minho, Background Interview, September 10).

However, for some students, their perception of the class as big and the students' participation as minimal made them feel uncomfortable in the oral class, especially for those students from Language and Literacy who were used to taking courses with smaller number of students.

It's actually bigger than any classes I had last semester. Last semester I had always like fifteen. So just physically being in the room with such a large class I think does change it because in my other classes last semester we did a lot of small group activities, a lot of small discussions, and everyone kind of shares and also a lot more people participated. I think in our class so far, it's like there are few talkers and I am one of them. But a lot of people are not quite contributing yet. Also Nancy is doing a lot more lecturing. I know she says she doesn't want to do that as much, but that is also the difference. Again I think it has to do with the size. In my other classes we had professors easier to have a discussion with us because it was small. (Mary, Background Interview, September 16).

The oral discussion held little meaning and learning experiences for me. For the majority of the class, Nancy dominated the conversation. Therefore, indirectly I inferred that she would talk, and the class would simply listen. While she provided ample opportunities for questions, I spent the majority of the time trying to make sense of the ideas. I was not trying to delve deeper into thought or reflect. I was simply listening and learning. Also, oftentimes, the questions of other students were not of interest to me. Sometimes the questions were ideas I have heard explained a thousand times. Sometimes they took a stance that was irrelevant to my own personal research and graduate work. Actually, sometimes I just did not care. As a result, instantaneously as one student began to talk, my attention to the conversation vanished. I began to think about items I need from the grocery store, errands I had to run, and ideas that I wanted to include in my

papers. Unless I was directly participating in the oral discussion, which was a rare occurrence, I felt overall that I learned little from this method. (Alicia, Self-reflective Essay)

I noticed that many people in the class do not talk during large oral discussion, or that their talk is limited. The only time I felt like the discussion was truly with other members of the class (as opposed to the teacher and I or teacher to all) was when we were in our asynchronous small groups after our online discussion. It seemed intimate, fair, and intriguing. I like small-group discussion. It allows us all to argue, ask, and ponder with scaffolded guidance. It allows me active “thinking time.” By this I mean that I actually found myself taking in the comment, justifying it, and then responding. There was a more thoughtful progression for me in this interaction. This class though just didn’t seem to be engendered to a culture of talk, talk, talk, that some of us Language and Literacy people are! (Hillary, Self-reflective Essay).

Oral discussion was also perceived as an anxiety-provoking situation especially for some international students. Yiping described this as follows in her self-reflective essay:

I believe most people will feel more comfortable to say something when in small group. Our class size is a little big, for my perspective. Thus my public speaking anxiety would arise when I wanted to say something in the class. Everybody could not say at the same time. You need to wait until others finish their talking. So sometimes we can see there were some students raising their hands to wait for their turn. For me, waiting would make me feel nervous. Actually more time I have waited, more anxious I would feel. Therefore, if I saw somebody raising his/her hands to wait for speaking, I would usually give up saying something I originally wanted to say. In addition, engaging in oral discussion is a more anxious experience to me than engraining in written discussion since oral expression requires me to think and translate my thought into language very quickly. I think I would feel embarrassed if I could not express what I mean clearly. And the worries of being unable to express clearly would compound the situation and made me feel less motivated to engage in oral discussion. Of course sometimes I did not engage in oral discussion simply because I did not catch what others were just saying. In written discussion, this would not happen since I can view every word others wrote. For my opinion, I feel in oral discussion the difference between me and my American classmates are larger because of the English oral expression ability. But in written discussion, I felt the difference is smaller, especially when engaging in asynchronous discussion. However, I guessed if my English is better, I might like both of them. I feel the written mode of discussion would make me think things more deeply and thoroughly thus the responses are more thoughtful in general.

## **Synchronous CMC Activity**

Three times during the semester, the oral discussion was interrupted midway through the class and the students went to a computer lab where they continued the conversation in written format using the Daedalus Interchange, real-time, synchronous computer network. However, technological problems got in the way of the discussions during the first two sessions. Everyone was not able to log on successfully all at the same time. Some students could not join the discussion until the end of the conversation. Fortunately, for the last interchange, the computers and the program were set up in advance so all students could log on and have a full 45-minute discussion session. To give the reader a sense of how this activity worked, I will present my observation of the synchronous discussion held on that particular day, Oct. 31.

The class reached an agreement about the topics that they would discuss on the Interchange before they went to a computer lab. These agreements served as prompts to start and maintain an on-task, computer-mediated synchronous discussion. The class was divided into four groups as they chose one of the agreed-upon topics of their interest. The written CMC discussion segment was held in a computer lab that had computer monitors lining the walls. The teacher and the students arrived at the computer lab and logged onto the Daedalus communication program called Interchange. After members of the class logged on, they began the conversation either by offering suggestions for discussion, or by asking for someone to start. For the most part, students sat quietly at their terminals reading and typing comments as part of the discussion. Only occasionally they would giggle, laugh, and make verbal comments about the written conversation privately between themselves or publicly for everybody to hear. From an observer's view, the students' behaviors while participating on the CMC exchange varied widely at any given time from energetic typing and reading, to what appeared as tiredness with little concern for what was being discussed or said. After roughly 45 minutes of CMC discussion, the teacher wrote a comment indicating that it was time to quit. The class members posted their last comments, logged off their computes and left the computer lab. At the next

class meeting, the teacher handed out copies of the conversation and asked the students how they had experienced the discussion, and then started the class by addressing some of the issues the students had raised in the discussion.

### **Asynchronous CMC Activity**

For two particular time periods during the semester (for a time period on Oct. 3-4 and on Nov. 14-15), the students participated in asynchronous discussions on Blackboard. The students did not have to come to campus so long as they could access the Internet on those days. Because the asynchronous CMC activity was chosen as an object of subsequent analysis of how CMC discourse worked in a particular sociocultural context, this section on asynchronous CMC activity deserves an elaboration in terms of 1) its relative position as opposed to the oral speech activity and 2) the students' experience with this medium of communication, as constructed from diverse factors embedded in the class.

Each of the online discussions began with the teacher posting what she hoped would be a provocative statement that reflected some issue or topic addressed by the class reading assignments. Students were asked to post at least three comments within a designated time frame (from 9 am on Oct. 3 to 5 pm on Oct. 4 for the first discussion; from 9 am on Nov. 14 to midnight on Nov. 15 for the second discussion). The students could read already posted messages and click on "Reply" if they wanted to reply to a particular message, or start a new thread on a topic of their own choosing by clicking on that option on Blackboard.

One should note that all CMC transcripts published in this study are exact reproductions of the transcripts and are unedited. Therefore, the messages posted in the transcripts are reproduced here exactly as they were sent – typographic errors, mechanics, invented conventions and all. There are some adjustments made to the transcripts: Each message was hand-numbered to facilitate data analysis; pseudonyms are used in the transcripts and throughout this study to disguise the real names of the participating



students and the teacher; and the names of the university where the study took place have been replaced with pseudonyms. However, in the actual online discussions, the students and the teacher used their real names; pseudonyms were inserted later.

As can be seen in Figure 4-3 below, messages on Blackboard are arranged graphically in “threads” in which those that are apparently on the same topic are grouped together. It is possible for a participant to send a reply to a thread other than the one within which the originating message appears. In practice, however, once people are familiar with the system, they tend to position their replies so that they appear in the same thread as the originating message. Exchanges created over time thus have a persistent presence in the graphical record of the conference. By glancing down the page, it is easy to see who is talking to whom. For example, looking at the record of the discussion conference (as in Figure 4-3), we can see messages that are part of a thread (e.g., messages from # 36 to # 44 where the participants explicitly replied to Ming #35), and messages that stand alone (e.g., message #49 where Ming gave an unsolicited opinion). Note that the way the messages were displayed on Blackboard was by topical threads rather than by time. For example, message #49 displayed at the end was written before messages #42, #46, #47, and #48.

**Figure 4-3: Messages on Blackboard**

35. Chatting language VS. Writing	Ming	Thu Nov 14 2002 5:59 pm
36. Re: Chatting language VS. ...	Nancy	Thu Nov 14 2002 8:33 pm
37. Re: Chatting language VS. ...	Morgan	Thu Nov 14 2002 10:47 pm
38. Re: Chatting language VS. ...	Eunjoo	Fri Nov 15 2002 3:53 am
39. Re: Chatting language VS. ...	Jason	Fri Nov 15 2002 9:29 am
40. Re: Chatting language VS. ...	Nancy	Fri Nov 15 2002 9:41 am
41. Re: Chatting language ...	Stacy	Fri Nov 15 2002 3:11 pm
42. Re: Chatting language ...	Mary	Fri Nov 15 2002 6:58 pm
43. Re: Chatting language VS. ...	Seunghee	Fri Nov 15 2002 4:44 pm
44. Re: Chatting language VS. ...	Eunjoo	Fri Nov 15 2002 11:52 pm
45. Dyson's article	Ming	Fri Nov 15 2002 5:50 pm
46. Re: Dyson's article	Nancy	Fri Nov 15 2002 7:02 pm
47. Re: Dyson's article	Seunghee	Fri Nov 15 2002 10:55 pm
48. Re: Dyson's article	Eunjoo	Sat Nov 16 2002 12:07 am
49. One thing interesting!	Ming	Fri Nov 15 2002 6:02 pm

For each discussion, students were assigned to one of three different groups (with 7 to 8 students in each group) and they were expected to read and comment on only their own group's postings. However, the system on Blackboard allowed the students easy access to other discussion forums; the implicit rule for "sticking to" their own group was fragile. There were many students who reported that they "sneaked around" other groups. One student (Ming) even implanted other group's messages onto her discussion group to light up the conversation of her own group. Another student (Hillary) decided to contribute to a different group, although she did it only once. These "disruptive" behaviors were more evident in the second discussion, partially because they felt more comfortable with each other in the class and partially because they could accurately predict that the teacher would welcome these little "resistances."

Group assignments were rotated so that students had the opportunity to interact with different classmates for each discussion. However, at least two or three students who were assigned to the same group in the first discussion met again in the second discussion. The students had a clear idea of who their first asynchronous discussion group-mates were, responding to the presence of previous group-mates either positively or negatively. For example, Seunghye saw her former asynchronous group-mate Jason's presence in her group as a negative influence on her participation in the second discussion because she thought that "Jason would talk about things that I could not comprehend." On the other hand, Eunjo perceived her former asynchronous group-mate Ming as a positive force: "When she wrote about things in our first discussion, her comments usually made sense to me. I was glad to see her again."

Having described how the asynchronous CMC worked, the students' experiences with the asynchronous CMC activity are now worth some special attention. From discourse-based interviews with the students and the students' self-reflective essays, I was able to obtain information about the students' personal perspectives and frames of reference – their sense-making – with respect to the asynchronous speech activity and their evolving sense of discourse and learning experiences involved in the CMC activity.

The insights gleaned from the students' responses also illuminate the textual analysis I will present in the next chapters.

### Theme1: I Could Behave Like Don Quixote

For the students who usually hesitated to speak up in the oral segment of class and who identified themselves as quiet individuals, the speech activities of the asynchronous CMC afforded an alternative avenue for them to express themselves. Ming, Vivien, Minh, and Yang were the most illustrative cases for this theme.

For Ming, the oral class was a site of struggle partially because it clashed with her cultural background, an educational system in which student voice was not usually encouraged at least in her school days. Her desire not to interrupt the class and not to ask stupid questions in front of others also forced her to remain silent during the oral class.

As an international student who usually hesitates to speak up in class, I love asynchronous discussions very much. I was brought up from the culture that does not encourage students to ask questions in class. Although nowadays things has begun to change, when I was young, students were supposed to take in whatever the teacher taught. The teaching in class was usually lecture type. When I hear something that I do not understand, I usually just let it go, or write it down and check the books or ask the teacher privately after class. I seldom raise those questions in class because I am afraid to interrupt the lecture and lose my face by asking too easy or stupid questions. (Self-reflective Essay)

However, Ming found the asynchronous discussion to be a “fear-free” zone in which she could post many of her carefully-crafted messages without feeling “on the spot” and without the fear of interrupting the discussion.

In asynchronous discussions, I felt easier to ask. I will not feel that I am on the spot when I ask a question, and I will not feel guilty (if I interrupt the discussion, I may feel guilty) because the discussion still goes on and my question will not interrupt it. The good thing about the asynchronous discussion is that we can take our time not only reading all the messages, but also composing the whole messages, with more details and more organized ideas. ... I believe that asynchronous discussion is very helpful in learning, especially for people who are not used to raise their hand and ask questions orally in class like me. (Self-reflective Essay)

Like Ming, Vivien was also one of the quiet students during the oral speech activities. She reported that she did not make comments in class for fear of evaluation by her classmates, be it their judgment of her ideas or of asking an irrelevant question: “I have an opinion, but I am shy. I don’t always feel like what I have to say would be appropriate for the moment in class or is it gonna waste their time?” (Discourse-based Interview, November 26). For Vivien, the asynchronous CMC activities provided her with a safer alternative to speaking her ideas for the following reasons:

I feel completely comfortable writing my thoughts and questions. I can account for this disparity because my classmates can choose not to read my comments but they can do little about what I say in class. I like the asynchronous discussion because they take place over the course of several days. During the time I am able to gather my ideas and compose them into a message that I hope is thought provoking. Asynchronous discussions also offer the luxury of reading as many or as few responses in one setting as I want. I can also go back and read a response several times in order to craft a thoughtful response to it. Being able to participate in the discussions from the comfort of my own home at any hour of the day is another benefit of this type of discussion. Because of these features, I really, really enjoyed the asynchronous discussions. I was able to think about the articles and respond to them in ways that I would not have otherwise been able to. I was able to throw out my ideas and have them critiqued by my classmates. In the written mode, I felt comfortable and able to respond more effectively. (Self-reflective Essay)

For another student, Minho, the asynchronous speech activities served as a stage for him to “behave like Don Quixote.” He wrote in his self-reflective essay: “Hamlet or Don Quixote? If I am asked whether I am like Hamlet or Don Quixote, I would say I am more like Hamlet when it comes to thinking but I want to take after Don Quixote when it comes to saying something and in particular in classroom discussion.” He reported that even though he did not have so much anxiety as to prevent him from expressing his ideas in oral discussion, he still found himself extremely influenced by his previous experiences in the Korean educational system in which he had been expected to listen carefully to, not to interrupt, a professor. Thus, he had a tendency to listen attentively but not to talk much during the oral discussion. Besides, he said that he sometimes could not figure out what his English-speaking peers said when they joined the oral discussion, which made him stop engaging in an ongoing discussion and search for some clues to

solving the problem. However, in asynchronous speech activities, this “Stop-and-Go phenomenon” rarely happened to him: “I could read every word written by native speakers of English and I could refer back to the articles or other messages to find clues to what is going on if I was confronted with problems with understanding.” The asynchronous speech activities thus afforded Minho an opportunity to express himself with a better understanding of others’ words. In addition, the extended time enabled Minho to post a thoughtful message.

The asynchronous CMC provided me with much more time to think and check my writings. I was not under pressure to give an immediate reaction to the writing and instead I could have sufficient time to think and organize my thoughts before I actually wrote something, which is hardly possible in the oral mode. I could express myself and my idea much better in the asynchronous mode than in the oral discussions, because there’s sufficient time to think, organize my ideas and furthermore correct mistakes if any. (Self-reflective Essay)

For Yang, the asynchronous speech activities were also perceived as a place for expressing herself freely. Yang had first experienced asynchronous written discussions on the Blackboard over the summer in Nancy’s another class, psychology of human learning. She said she had loved it then, and she loved it even more in this class because she felt she was more part of the discussions. While in oral discussion, she was often hesitant to speak up unless she had an “important” question that needed to be addressed right away, on Blackboard she had the luxury to refer back to the readings before stating her opinions because of the expanded time. The “infinite space on the cyber-world,” as Yang put it, allowed her to write as much as she wanted: “Even if I feel my comments are not as sophisticated or intelligent as other people, I don’t have to worry about taking up other people’s space because I know there is always space for me” (Discourse-based Interview, November 19).

### Theme 2: I Could Experience Heteroglossia

The students who reported that they could better express themselves in asynchronous discussion with the knowledge that they have enough time to craft their

responses, that they do not necessarily interrupt others because their readers have a choice to read or not to read their comments, and that there is always space for their thoughts, also appreciated the asynchronous speech activities because they could listen to different voices. For example, Yang reported that she loved this medium of talk because she felt that “the concept of learning from peers,” not just from a teacher, was truly realized in these discussions.

I learn a lot more from my classmates than from the teacher in the asynchronous discussions. People seem to become more thoughtful when they write. They make more elaborate comments on the readings than when they talk in class. The fact that everyone talks on-line makes the learning experience richer than when only a few students talk. ... It's definitely better than just reading an article, because when I read the article, I already have my view, I didn't really relate it to other articles we have read. So when I saw people's messages, they really reminded that there are definitely many different ways of looking at these articles. There are things that I missed, and there are things that people added based on their own experiences, not only their experiences in this class, but also their general life experiences. So I feel that I learned a lot. (Discourse-based Interview, November 19)

Yang further revealed how these asynchronous CMC activities made her better connect with, in particular, other international students and learn from their voices:

I appreciate this written discussion because you can hear different students' voices. Not everyone was speaking up in class, so in a written discussion, you can see a lot of different things. And I also realized that international students tended to bring their backgrounds, like in our previous discussion and here as well, they all talked about the way they were educated in their home country. I don't think they would say those kinds of things in class because probably they think that it's not relevant, “We are in the States. We are here to learn something, not to tell them about where we are from.” But in a written discussion, you can say whatever's in your mind. There's always a space for different perspectives. (Discourse-based Interview, November 19)

In her self-reflective essay, Yang recounted this in a similar light.

As an in-group person, I am delighted to see how international students can bring in our backgrounds in an asynchronous written discussion. As one of the international students who came from educational systems and cultures very different from that of the American students, I am aware that our reading of the articles is likely to be different from the American readers. However, many of us

seem to be reluctant to express this difference in class, partly because of language barrier that prevents us from elaborating on our ideas, partly because people are more self-conscious when it comes to being “different” from other people. In on-line discussions, we have time to elaborate and although it is still technically “public”, international students are more comfortable to show how we read and write with authority. (Self-reflective Essay)

In fact, many American students noticed that some international students who had little oral participation in the class often were most prolific in the written discussions, particularly in the asynchronous discussions. For example, Rubin reported that he was very much impressed by international students’ active participation in the written discussions and that he valued their input into the discussions: “Much of the diversity of ideas from different cultures came through this computer-mediated mode of communication. Without this, the class would have lost some of its richness and depth” (Rubin, Self-reflective Essay).

As a result of coming to terms with the diversity of ideas in the asynchronous speech activities, the students said that their knowledge of the course content had been enriched, and their conceptual horizons had been broadened. Ali, for example, commented on this positive aspect:

I think my knowledge has been enriched. When you read an article, you get some insights. But when you listen to some other voices, some other people, some other insights, I think those insights give you more than the article does. The article is very very focused, very specialized, very focused on one point, but insights that you get from other people give you a new horizon to think in a broader way. In that sense, they are insightful, and they are useful. (Discourse-based Interview, November 25)

The students were aware that even though they had already thought about the ideas presented in the discussion, the ideas they had thought about before would never be the same as they were affected by different voices of the class. Morgan described this transformative power of CMC discussion as follows:

I think for most of the ideas we discussed here, definitely my thinking about them was broadened and was affected by the class, but most of the ideas I’d already had before. It wasn’t like, “This is a new idea that I haven’t thought about that before.” It was like, “Here’s what I have thought in the past and research says

about that.” Yes, I have had these ideas before. Getting to hear other people taking on them is really helpful, really enlightening, and educational. Being able to discuss them and having a forum for doing that, yeah, that’s not something you really do outside the forum of the setting like that. So I would say, from that point of view, it’s very valuable for me. (Morgan, Discourse-based Interview, November 19)

For Seunghye, the effect was more than deepening her knowledge about the course content. In her self-reflective essay, Seunghye reported the benefit of listening to different voices in the asynchronous CMC activities in terms of learning from other students whom she perceived “have a potential to be an outstanding researcher” in their fields of study.

I got benefit a lot from reading some students’ writing which inspired, challenged, and facilitated me to understand some of the articles. Strangely, this mode of discussion made me to be merged, not alienated, into the same goal to contribute the topic dealt with our assigned readings. And, the classmates’ efforts to bring their related previous experiences and knowledge into the topic made possible our discussion to be an opportunity to experience “heteroglossia” which Bakhtin mentioned. ... And I think that our written document of asynchronous itself will be another textbook to facilitate my understanding the topics alongside our own assigned readings. That means our classmates are in the same position with the authors of our reading lists. Ya, we all have a potential to be an outstanding researcher in a degree to publish articles. I definitely feel that during our class sessions, despite the fact that their articles can give another burden to the students who are slow readers like me. (Self-reflective Essay)

For Seunghye, the opportunities for listening to different voices of her peers put her in the same position with her “seniors” and ultimately led her to envision her future self as mature researcher.

As a master’s student which means an immature student in my academic discipline, it was a thrill to be in the same place with my seniors on the path of academic study. And it provides me with a vision to be mature in my study later as my fellow students. (Self-reflective Essay)

For another student, Morgan, the very act of learning to listen to different points of view was itself educational in light of her current and future career as a teacher.

I probably learned as much about classroom practice through discussing with people who are actually classroom teachers, and other fields of academic learning



through discussing with people who are not in educational psychology. And I think that that definitely would not have happened just in classroom oral discussion. There are just too many people. I don't know whether or not that would be considered important enough to want this kind of discussion. But I think it's a valuable one. ... I think that it's very important to be able to look at things from different perspectives. Learning to understand different points of view is very important especially since pretty much all of us we are in graduate school whether or not we plan to be classroom educators or whatever, we are all working to better the lives of our students of different backgrounds. So learning to listen to other points of view is very important. (Discourse-based Interview, November 19)

### Theme 3: I Could Create My Own Structure in Carnival

For certain students, the asynchronous CMC activities afforded an opportunity to set up their own structures in a carnivalesque learning environment. Bakhtin's idea of carnival as a site of transformation and renewal seems to be very consistent with what one of the students, Hillary, identified as a place for resistance.

Certainly the asynchronous online discussion that we have had created a new way for me to talk about the literature as opposed to fitting it in some sort of a bone structure that Nancy set up in the beginning by her teaching. I get to set up my own structure. If I don't feel like talking about Faigley, we don't have to. I can talk about something else. (Discourse-based Interview, November 21)

For Hillary, the carnivalesque CMC site made it possible to be free among people. Seen from Bakhtin's concept of carnival, physical and social distances between individuals are suspended in the CMC context, and thus constrained, coercive relations give way to ones based in freedom and equality. One can get the impression that the CMC context provides a fertile soil for what Bakhtin calls "carnival abuse" (1984, p. 213), which is directed at traditional authority and its "old truth." For Hillary, carnival abuse was realized in her awareness that she could resist the authority's structure and set up her own structure. Although resisting traditional authority and its "old truth" did involve a certain degree of anxiety, it was nevertheless rewarding to Hillary.

Part of that is a little bit scary, or you feel a little bit of anxiety, because you don't want Nancy to feel like, "Did she even read Faigley?" as opposed to saying "I don't have much to say about it. Yeah, it's a good article, but I have to wait for

somebody else to stimulate something for me to say.” Whereas, Dyson, for example, this one was like, “I have stuff to say, not needing any sort of scaffolding or prompt from anybody else to make a comment on.” So, I like that. It allows me that sort of freedom, that sort of ability to create my own structure if I want and not to have to fit in. In that case, I think it can make knowledge deeper, and it’s definitely something I would expect to happen from an online conversation. And I would expect that to happen in any class where discourse is important. This is a psycholinguistics class, it should be. (Discourse-based Interview, November 21)

The reader should note that this kind of resistant behavior did not come easily equally to every student in the study, as will be made clear in Theme 5. It was probably easier for Hillary to exercise her “resistant agency” in these activities because “discourse” has been an important theme in Hillary’s life.

I’m in classrooms all the times where talk is very important and discourse is really important. For me, I think my ideas of it, co-construction of texts, it’s just broader because it’s adding in another venue, adding in online discussion as a form of talk. I took Nancy’s class before, so anytime you do that, I used to use online stuff with my kids, so I think of it as another venue for them to practice their knowledge and to set it up. (Discourse-based Interview, November 21)

Another important feature of Bakhtin’s carnival is that in carnival all people are participating. Carnival is not a spectacle, not something performed by some and watched by others. Instead, the line between spectator and performer is blurred. One of the reasons that the asynchronous CMC activities could encourage freer contact among participants by blurring the line might be in the decentralized role of the teacher. As Ali commented:

I’m not saying that the oral discussion was not useful. Not at all. But this mode made it possible for more, all the students to contribute, reflect, state their views and opinions. While in the oral discussion, for example, students come to the class with the attitude that the instructor is there and they want to learn from her/him as much as they can. Thus the rate of students’ participation is very minimal, and usually comes in the form of question and short comments. In the asynchronous mode, the instructor’s role was decentralized. Over the course, she was the overarching supervisor, but the students were given their freedom and the instructor did not determine in most of the cases the direction of the discussion. (Self-reflective Essay)

#### Theme 4: I Could Expand My Definition of Learning

While some students like Hillary had entered the class with an already fully-developed awareness of the co-construction of texts and the value of written discussion as another avenue for learning, it took other students a while to develop an awareness and respect for different forms of knowledge and learning afforded in the CMC activities. For example, Rita reported that she did not openly embrace the idea of written discussion at the beginning of the semester and that her bias against the use of written discussion negatively affected her participation in the first asynchronous discussion.

Upon hearing about them on the first day of class I remember feeling a tug of anxiety and the suspicion that they wouldn't be very useful to me. And that I would much rather prefer a traditional, oral discussion in the classroom mediated by the professor. Although I'd like to think I'm very open to non-traditional ways of knowing and learning, I was guilty of wanting to stick to the status-quo. I didn't want to venture into the cyber classroom. ...The assignment felt more like an obligation rather than a fun, learning experience. Because of this bias, I neither contributed as much as I would have liked to nor did I appreciate other entries as much as I could have. (Self-reflective Essay)

By the time the 2<sup>nd</sup> asynchronous discussion occurred, Rita felt very open to the experience and as a result eagerly read the entries and eagerly responded to them.

What had started out as something dreaded had turned into something fun and extremely useful. The online experience allowed me not only to expand my comfort zone from the traditional classroom to the cyber-classroom, but also to highlight the very important themes of awareness and respect for different forms of knowledge and learning – exactly what we were reading about in our articles. The experience encouraged me to be open to learning in a new environment. So, in addition to the terrific insights that I learned from my classmates during our cyber discussions, I also learned a great deal about expanding one's definition of learning. (Self-reflective Essay)

Rita's changed position toward CMC came along with her awareness that everything is connected to everything else in this course. As the course evolved over time, Rita began to experience the course as if she were "playing a Connect-the-dots game."

One of the themes set forth on the first day of class was the connection between language and thought and how language causes one's thought to grow. With that

as a focus point, it was easy to connect the dots and see how each article connected to another article, which in turn connected to a discussion, which in turn connected to another discussion. ... Aside from the coherent nature and flow to the course, we were allowed and encouraged to make connections with everything to everything. Whether we were talking about the connection between language and thought, between language and cognition, between psycholinguistics and cultural nuances, between emotion and affect, everything seemed to be connected to something. Often I would read an article and find myself connecting it to a previous article or to an experience I had as a teacher, as a student, as a human being. The connection between language and thought was such an encompassing theme, that other connections came easily. And perhaps what I enjoyed the most was the fact that the Connect-the-dots game was played by all. Whether we were discussing a topic in class, or sharing our thoughts in synchronous and asynchronous discussions, we had the opportunity to connect to the members of our class and to share and reflect upon each other's comments in such a way that the language we used, both written and oral, connected our thoughts. ( Final-exam #7)

For another student, Stacy, the whole process of participating in the CMC activities became a valuable experience even though she did not immediately see the value while she was participating in them. Her reflection was geared toward her future learning with an expanded definition of learning.

I can see now how different asynchronous versus synchronous versus oral. I think it's just good to get us to experience all these different environments and think about different ways of learning. ... I do feel that I learned more about myself as a learner, and about what I can do to be more successful in communicating in these types of environments in the future. I am interested in this type of research, and would like to take an online course to learn more about the processes involved in being a successful "online learner." I know that I will continue to engage in computer-mediated discussions throughout my career in education. With more practice, I am sure that I will adapt and become more comfortable in this environment and better able to communicate effectively, which will make these types of discussions more enjoyable and conducive to learning in the future. (Self-reflective Essay)

#### Theme 5: Well, I Didn't Like It Very Much, But...

Despite overall positive responses to the CMC activities, the students also identified some of the constraints the activities put on their participation and learning.

First, some students felt extremely pressured to write a lengthy, well-crafted message in this activity. For example, Stacy commented on how the written format of the discussion made it hard to concentrate just on ideas when she found herself worrying about producing grammatically correct sentences.

When discussing material that is challenging and requires deep levels of thought, I prefer to engage in verbal discussions of the material rather than discussions online because I feel that I am better able to express myself with spoken words than with written words. Writing does not come easy to me, and it takes me a very long time to write something that I feel adequately expresses what I want to communicate. My ideas are often interrupted by my obsession with writing grammatically correct sentences. Because it takes me so much time to express myself while writing, I ended up getting frustrated with the process and tended to not enjoy the written discussions as much as actual face-to-face discussions. (Discourse-based Interview, November 25)

From this statement, one gets the impression that writing on the Blackboard, which required numerous revisions and attention to language mechanics, was threatening to Stacy in that it tended to upset the equilibrium she needed to accomplish all of the tasks required of her: She had to tap into deep levels of thought, at the same time paying attention to her language. Stacy over-monitored her written output to the point where writing became an extremely time-consuming task.

Similarly, Alicia felt compelled and forced to write lengthier responses in these speech activities. She attributed this to the limitation imposed by the medium: “Since there was no immediate verification of understanding, my ideas needed more elaboration and clarification to ensure that my readers were able to understand my postings.” She further explained:

The reader was unable to ask the writer direct clarification questions here. Consequently, I felt the explanations had to be lengthier, elaborative, and formal for the reader to interpret the correct meaning. Thus, I disliked the extra time I had to put into the messages. With each response, I felt as if I was writing a paper to turn in to a professor for a grade. The catch was that I never knew what exactly the paper topic would be. Logging onto Blackboard was like walking into an essay exam with no idea what the professor would ask. (Self-reflective Essay)

For Alicia, writing on the Blackboard occupied large blocks of time without, in her perception, the guarantee of satisfactory results. She reported spending so much time on her writing that she was loath to log onto Blackboard.

The students' perceived need to write a lengthy, well-crafted, "smart" message seemed to be intensified when they felt competitive with other students. Hillary and Kelly commented on that.

One aspect I didn't like was that I found myself comparing my responses to others. Questions like "Are they long enough? Deep enough? Am I off base in my reading?" seemed to linger somewhere in my internal being as I composed and read. (Hillary, Self-reflective Essay)

I particularly felt this need to "be smart" as I like to call it, during the asynchronous posts. People tended to post longer messages in this situation, often quoting and citing authors as well. I definitely felt competitive with the other students. That's much more "my" reality than the way the task was orchestrated. (Kelly, Self-reflective Essay)

For other students (Stacy, Rubin, and Hilda), the lack of human touch in the written discussion was a negative aspect of written discussion.

Although I'm not a big "talker" in class, I do listen intently and find that I identify more with people's examples and comments when I hear them expressed verbally. I feel more involved in a discussion when I "see" and "hear" how passionate the speaker is about the topic. This makes each comment more meaningful and relevant to me. ... In written discussion, a strong opinion may be mistaken for anger or as an attack on another participant. It is not quite as easy to clear up misunderstandings in written communication as it is in oral communication where body language and visual cues are present to help. (Stacy, Self-reflective Essay)

In face-to-face oral discussion, I rely heavily on non-verbal clues given by the speaker to aid interpretation of the message, something lacking in a computer discussion even with emoticons. ... I still feel more comfortable communicating in the give and take of oral discussions with the immediacy of questions and comments on a given subject along with the non-verbal clues to meaning. (Rubin, Self-reflective Essay)

I missed the type of acknowledgement that is received while in face-to-face settings, the subtle nods of agreement or smiles, the gestures of disagreement or not understanding (although smily faces and other text symbols do help!). Although I am not one to participate very much in class, I like to see those types

of things going on during discussions. The computer-mediated discussions felt a bit impersonal at times. I often felt I had to overcompensate due to lack of face-to-face reactions or immediate responses that could be received in class discussions. I really missed that sense of “community” that we get by being in class, this is something I failed to feel while we participated in the computer-mediated discussions. (Hilda, Self-reflective Essay)

From the comments, one can see that the lack of non-verbal clues and immediate responses in the written activities that accompany oral speech activities led some students to feel clueless as to whether they had correctly interpreted others’ words or whether their intended meanings had been adequately conveyed and understood by their audience, which in turn forced the students to write lengthy messages as well as to over-monitor what they had to say. Hilda reported that she felt compelled to write a lengthy comment because she did not want to be misunderstood by others.

I was very conscious of the length of the responses and comments I made in computer-mediated discussions. I felt the need to be very clear and polite. I felt as if I monitored myself more so than I would in face-to-face discussions. I did this to make sure nobody would misunderstand me or take things the wrong way. (Self-reflective Essay)

For other students, the discomfort in doing the asynchronous speech activities was generated not from the medium but rather from the students’ stance toward the given topic being discussed and more broadly their stance toward how knowledge is constructed. When the topics of discussion did not fit into the students’ current knowledge, they tended not to enjoy the discussion. Jason commented on how he selectively appropriated others’ comments based on his judgment of their relevance to his existing knowledge.

Although I learned from this form, my learning was based mostly on incorporating that input which strengthened my current knowledge or added to existing knowledge in logical ways. Regrettably, I didn’t retain those comments as strongly which didn’t support my background knowledge. (Self-reflective Essay)

In a certain case, the student’s confidence in her own knowledge in the field got in the way of participating in the discussion. Mary expressed how what other people had to

say in the discussion was a kind of “what she already knows” and thus reduced her efforts further to negotiate meaning in the discussion.

I guess I usually think I am right. I mean, it's not that I can't learn something from someone else, or think that they don't have a valid point. It's mostly because I am confident in what I know in this field. This is close to my field of Language and Literacy and my undergraduate major was Cognitive Psychology. It's not like I'm confused about a whole lot, or that I am not secure about my position on things. I am secure, so there's not a lot that I get convinced about by other people. Not saying it doesn't happen, but it just not as often. (Discourse-based Interview, November 20)

Pei reported that she did not enjoy the discussion very much because she felt alienated from other students. Even though she probably had that feeling of alienation in oral discussions, it was more pronounced in written discussions, as she described in her self-reflective essay.

Quite often, I found myself disagree with viewpoints that were, interestingly, shared by other participants. And often, I noticed that I could neither get the other participants to talk about it (by responding) nor to discuss it in the direction that I found worth pursuing. As a result, I found myself, more often than not, an “out-group.” I attributed the differences to age and experiences. The impact of such an out-group experience was that I did not take an active role or try hard to pursue issues that were of importance to me. I tended to respond (as opposed to initiating) to topics brought up by other participants, and/or quit a discussion earlier than I would otherwise. “Why spoil their fun?,” I thought. (Self-reflective Essay)

For certain students, other responsibilities and demands eroded time they might have otherwise used for this class activity. Eunjoo spoke the most frequently about how often distractions in her non-academic life interfered with her academic life. An extremely devoted mother who spent most of her hours attending to her 8-month-old baby at home, she found it difficult to find the hours she needed to devote to her own studies. As the semester progressed, Eunjoo, who in addition to child care was taking three courses, found it difficult to concentrate on this course's activities.

I feel really guilty about not having contributed to the discussion as much as I wanted to. If I had taken this course a year ago, I would have been more active, actively seeking out what other people are thinking about this topic. I would have



visited other discussion groups to see what people in other groups are talking about. I could have spent the whole day, thinking about their questions and composing my thought into a well-crafted message. Oh, yes, I used to be such an active learner. With my baby to take care of, the situation is not the same. (Discourse-based Interview, November 25)

From the comment, one gets the impression that Eunjoo often felt so distracted by her other responsibilities that she lacked the time and energy to undertake the discovery processes required for actively participating in the speech activities. This was a constant theme in her first entries in the CMC activities. Her entries read as follows:

Hello~ ^^My 8 month-old baby, David, just started to sleep..."I hope he could sleep longer enough to have this communication" (First Asynchronous Discussion).

Hi! ^^ Finally, my baby fell to sleep (Second Asynchronous Discussion).

Thus far, I have illustrated under this theme the sources of the students' worries, discomfort, anxiety, and passive participation involved in the asynchronous speech activities, either generated by the constraints of the medium or generated by the participants' dispositions, beliefs, convictions, and other personal reasons. However, the speech activities nevertheless impacted these same students greatly on an emotional and social level as well as a cognitive level, whether they liked it or not. Alicia who reported that she loathed the discussions acknowledged the "ideological becoming" she experienced in the process.

Yeah, I think the thoughts are much deeper on this written asynchronous discussion. I think the discussion made me acquire or really take in deeper than sitting in class. I do think that made me think on my own more, but sometimes it's frustrating. I don't know, something about I was trying to think but also respond, they are more like, I don't know, I had to respond, but I was trying to get deeper into the discussion so I fight for time and even energy and effort, and motivation to put into it. If you are gone one day and you come home, you get fifty messages. Oh my gosh! But I do think, as much as it's annoying, as much as I want to pull my hair out, it forced me to understand the article deeper, sometimes I had to reread the articles to make sense of what other people had to say. It's a long draining process. (Discourse-based Interview, November 21)

For Mary, even though it was not for her cognitive development, it was nevertheless a learning experience because she was brought to the awareness that she was involved in a larger speech event than just a discussion.

I think it's made a bigger impact on a social and emotional level than it has on an intellectual level. It played a small part in me kind of fitting things together, when I think about the "chat" article and sort of bring in what I know into what we are talking about. But I just don't think I'm learning that much from other people. A little bit, but it helps me just put my ideas together. Once in a while there's a kind of gem, like someone says something and I think, "That's really neat." There's something I will always remember and there's something that adds to what I already understand about Language and Literacy, because it fits into all my studies. But I think it does more to make me think about tactfulness and social dynamics, who feels comfortable talking, how to talk to this person, and it must be hard for that person, and all that roller coaster goes through over the time period. (Discourse-based Interview, November 20)

Kelly, who confessed that she became very competitive with other students in the discussion, could appreciate all the complexities involved in any discourse event by experiencing CMC discussions first-hand.

I was really intrigued about all issues surrounding CMC – including culture, language, ingroup/outgroup, power, and gender that I had not considered before. I once actually thought research concerned with technology and teaching to be boring! What did I know?! Experiencing the intertwining themes surrounding CMC first hand was a real bonus of the class that I had not expected. (Self-reflective Essay)

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **LAYER 2: CMC DISCURSIVE PRACTICE**

In this chapter, I will present the findings of an intertextual analysis of CMC discourse that examined the dialogic relationships among utterances in CMC embedded in the context of the classroom culture I described in Chapter 4. Based on Bakhtin's overarching construct, intertextuality, in which any concrete utterance is "a link in the chain of speech communication of a particular sphere" (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 91), I hope to create a picture of how discursive practices of the students are represented in a series of CMC texts, focusing on the role of social interaction in discourse. The aim of the intertextual analysis, connecting the wider classroom context to the words on the screen through the heads of the writers, was to look into the sort of distributional networks and intertextual chains CMC messages entered into, and the sorts of transformation they went through, and thereby to capture the overall characteristics of CMC discourse. The intertextual analysis of the data in this study revealed processes of 1) appropriating others' words and reaccentuating them with their own intentions; 2) creating a potential base of abductive rules; 3) making the renewal of meanings in all new contexts beyond the given sphere of activity; and 4) keeping a constant intertextual balance between centripetal and centrifugal forces. The fact that the social life of a speaking collective of this class was so intensive, differentiated, and highly developed makes us see clearly how another's utterance in CMC becomes the subject of passionate communication, an object of interpretation, discussion, evaluation, rebuttal, support, and further development. A special case in which the intertextuality was not fully realized in the chain of speech communication in CMC is presented as a counter-example, focusing on what factors might hinder the participants from coming to grips with the historical life of their discourse. In concluding this chapter, I address methodological issues involved in the intertextual analysis of CMC discourse, focusing on how discourse-based interview can

help probe the processes of interpreting and producing texts and discover “the context of an utterance” in a chain of CMC discussion that might not be expressed in the actual text records.

### **Intertextual Rhythm of Conversation in CMC: Appropriating Others’ Words**

The intertextual rhythm of CMC discourse I observed in two asynchronous speech activities can be described by the process of appropriation and reaccentuation, the very process of producing utterances in a chain of communication. Wertsch (1998) interpreted the term *appropriation* as the process of “taking something that belongs to others and making it one's own” (p. 53). In Bakhtin's (1981) view, producing utterances inherently involves this process of appropriation:

The word in language is half someone else's. It becomes “one's own” only when the speaker populates it with his own intention, his own accent, when he appropriates the word, adapting it to his own semantic and expressive intention. Prior to this moment of appropriation, the word does not exist in a neutral and impersonal language (it is not, after all, out of a dictionary that the speaker gets his word!), but rather it exists in other people's mouths, in other people's contexts, serving other people's intentions: it is from there that one must take the word, and make it one's own. (p.293)

For Bakhtin, producing any utterance should be understood in terms of this necessary ever-present tension between someone else's and one's own. In another essay, Bakhtin (1986) described how we make others’ words our own – it is by assimilating, reworking, and reaccentuating the words with our own expression and their own evaluative tone:

All utterances are populated, and indeed constituted, by snatches of others’ utterances, more or less explicit or complete; our speech ... is filled with others’ words, varying degrees of otherness and varying degrees of “our-own-ness”, varying degrees of awareness and detachment. These words of others carry with them their own expression, their own evaluative tone, which we assimilate, rework, and reaccentuate. (p. 89)

The process of appropriation and reaccentuation was enormously significant in the intertextual history of CMC texts. An analogy to the intertextual history of any great classical works might be applicable to understanding the chain of CMC texts:

Every age re-accentuates in its own way the works of its most immediate past. The historical life of classic works is in fact the uninterrupted process of their social and ideological re-accentuation. Thanks to the intentional potential embedded in them, such works have proved capable of uncovering in each era and against ever new dialogizing backgrounds ever newer aspects of meaning; their semantic content literally continues to grow, to further create out of itself. Likewise their influence on subsequent creative works inevitably includes re-accentuation. New images in literature are very often created through a re-accentuating of old images, by translating them from one accentual register to another (from the comic plane to the tragic, for instance, or the other way around). (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 421)

With this analogy, we can look into what conditions the ever-present re-accentuation of languages and images in the CMC texts. Just as it is against the changing dialogizing backgrounds that any classical work continues to grow, it is often a change in the background of the participants they brought into the classroom (e.g., the participants' contexts including their different intentions, intellectual and cultural histories, interests, and experiences) that animated the CMC dialogue in the composition of heteroglossia. In each moment when the dialogue of languages had experienced change of any kind as the participants' conditions of perception had changed, the language of an image the participants each created in their subsequent utterances in response to previous utterances began to "sound in a different way, or is bathed in a different light, or is perceived against a different dialogizing background" (Bakhtin, 1981. p. 420).

The following excerpt drawn from the first asynchronous discussion on Blackboard in which the participants in Group 1 co-constructed texts throughout October 3 and 4 will give the reader an initial sense of how the processes of appropriation and reaccentuation were always played out in the intertextual chain of discourse in CMC.

#1

Date: Thu Oct 3 2002 4:17 pm

Author: Minho

Subject: Too Ideal...

Discussion, my opinion, discourse, interpersonal relationship with teachers and classmates, classroom discourse and Dialogic discourse, Inquiry, etc... These were somewhat new and may be still new to the deepest part of my mind.

I am from a different culture where at least in my school days no discussion, no question, no response (I am a little bite exaggerating) were allowed. One of the main reason might be too many students in a classroom. (I wonder these approaches are feasible in such a big classroom environment too.)

In a nutshell, there was no "PUBLIC SPACE" for students. In the first article, Kathy looked struggling to put a different breath into the traditional classroom environment. She, however, was confronted with a variety of obstacles like sociopolitical forces and even what she has got used to.

I think some of my teachers in my school days might have been like Kathy. I guess they were also faced with similar problems. In particular, the number things like test scores, how many students entered a prestigious university, etc might have haunted them.

I think high of "dialogic approach in education" but at the same time I really wonder how I can make my future students free from the bondage of the number and result-oriented attitude and enjoyable with such pluralism and heteroglossia.

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#2

Date: Thu Oct 3 2002 4:45 pm

Author: Nancy

Subject: Re: Too Ideal...

Wonderful, Minho. You are highlighting the fragile and difficult aspect that such an approach to discussion requires. I love your words.

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#3

Date: Fri Oct 4 2002 10:06 am

Author: Morgan

Subject: Re: Too Ideal...

What an incredible turn of phrase! "I love your words." It's not an expression that would have ever occurred to me, it seems much more natural to me to praise the idea than the words. I'm trying to decide if that's something that comes of your bilingual background or from your linguistic studies background. In any case I think it's far more communicative and expressive in this case than the other would be.

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#4

Date: Thu Oct 3 2002 4:52 pm

Author: Jason

Subject: Re: Too Ideal...Amen!

I agree whole heartedly with Minho. The concept of diglossia seems to misrepresent the class as one collective unit equal in to the teacher. But any collective is made up of individuals. As Minho astutely stated, these individuals are NOT HOMOGENEOUS. Each person brings unique schema to the environment upon which to draw. Based upon this fact, we have the basis for socially constructed knowledge. The down side? Some will contribute and some might not. Here the teacher has to play two assertive roles: First, the teacher has to in order to facilitate learning and clarify or correct misconception(as we saw, for example, in the Hammer article); second, the teacher needs to act as a mediator when students either over-participate (if such a thing really exists) or under-participate.

The theoretical construct of classroom dialogia is an ideal every teacher (irrespective of the course content) should aim for. I think it is up to us as teachers to now take the next step...how to practically implement the construct into classes where it only exists as theory. I believe that it won't be as easy as it sounds (sorry about the skepticism)...

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#5

Date: Fri Oct 4 2002 9:36 am

Author: Vivien

Subject: Re: Too Ideal...Amen!

Jason and Minho,

I couldn't agree with the two of you more! I completely understand the pressure of tests and student performance on those tests. Although I worked in a university setting, I was expected to cover the material that would be presented on the test. And to make matters worse, the classes grades had to fit on a "perfect" bell curve. So, the reality of education or whatever you want to call it is sometimes overwhelming for the good-intentioned teacher. So, Jason, I do not see you as a skeptic. And Minho, I can related (a little) to what you're talking about. But, like Jason said, it's an ideal we should strive for.

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#6

Date: Fri Oct 4 2002 10:26 am

Author: Morgan

Subject: Re: Too Ideal...Amen!

You're right, dialogue is a goal for teacher's to aim for. But I can't help thinking of the challenges faced by teachers in school systems where the students have been enculturated like Minho was describing, to be strictly responsive instead of offering their own ideas. It's got to be even harder in a mixed classroom where some students completely buy into the whole discussion thing and some find it almost disrespectful to question what the teacher says.

Most of the articles we've read this week have addressed diglossia in terms of the fear and apprehension associated with performance in a second language or culture. A couple of articles have sort of touched on the different ways people treat each other and ideas. What I think we tend to forget is that this matter of varied dialogue styles isn't necessarily defined by language boundaries. Just think about the differences in behavior between a stereotypical Catholic school classroom and the High School for the Performing and Visual Arts.

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#7

Date: Fri Oct 4 2002 1:50 pm

Author: Seunghee

Subject: Re: Too Ideal...

I agree with Minho, esp. because we're from the same culture. In my high school days, a new German teacher came. Her teaching style afreshed us a lot. There was a discussion, sts' role plays and it was quite dialogic. At that time, German was one of the required courses in the college entrance exam. So, the other classes was definitely lecture-based, monologic ones. Thus, a while after, we could see she was in conflict with other German teachers. The school system was too inflexible to accept different approaches, and there were incessant concerns about the possible drawbacks of something new. (eg. falling classroom average grades)

However, despite the difficulty to be feasible in a certain culture, I think that dialogic classrooms in itself have many good aspects. It's been just one year since I came here. Adjusted to the lecture-based instruction, firstly, I had difficulty in some discussion-based classes I took here. But, I think that despite the reduced lecture, I could learn a lot by my peers. Most of them were very experienced teachers, so they shared their teaching experiences and understanding several discussions. I, as a foreigner and inexperienced teacher, could learn a lot by my more advanced peers.

But, again I think because of what Minho pointed still in some culture, the "dialogic class" is TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE.

Six of the eight participants in the Group 1 discussion forum posted messages on the "Too Ideal" topic thread. Let us first look at how Minho (#1) initiated this topic. In initiating this "Too Ideal" topic, Minho offered a thoughtful and well-crafted narrative that began with an ironic and poetic statement about the new constructs he had read in the articles for the week's discussion ("Discussion, my opinion, discourse, interpersonal relationship with teachers and classmates, classroom discourse and Dialogic discourse, Inquiry, etc... These were somewhat new and may be



still new to the deepest part of my mind”). Then he recounted his experiences in the Korean educational system, and ended with an indirect question (“I really wonder how I can make my future students free from the bondage of the number and result-oriented attitude and enjoyable with such pluralism and heteroglossia”).

In a discourse-based interview, Minhø reported that after reading the three articles assigned for the week, he had ambivalent feelings about the constructs the authors of the articles created. In the following comment, Minhø illustrated how the words of the authors were not be easily assimilated into his own context even though he “thinks high of dialogic approach in education,” and how much he wanted to let his American peers know how he felt about the constructs:

You know, I’ll ultimately go back to Korea and teach English there, after getting a degree here in the U. S. So I have this tendency to think of everything I read in this class from an EFL teacher’s perspective. After reading these three articles, I wondered whether those constructs are applicable to Korean educational contexts. I was like, “That’s great, but would that work in Korea?” I was not implying in this message that it’s out of the question to do it. Rather, I sort of wanted to show where I came from and where my current state of mind is. I wanted to give especially my American peers an opportunity to look at things from our perspective, since almost half of the students in this class came from non-Western countries. They might want to listen to what we think about all these constructs. (Discourse-based Interview, September16)

Certainly the question of how possibly to apply what he had learned here in the U. S. to his own context was an issue he had lost sleep over; he was pinned by the paradoxical need for new teaching practices that might conflict with the need for considering his own future teaching context in Korea. In his CMC text, Minhø wanted to create an image that the two conflicting needs are kept in tension, without doing violence to each other.

What Minhø wanted to portray in his message reminds us of Bakhtin’s emphasis that any utterance should be understood in terms of the ever-present tension between someone else’s and one’s own. Bakhtin’s perception that language lies on the borderline between the self and the other points to an important aspect of appropriation that Minhø showed in his text - namely, that it always involves resistance of some sort. To quote

Bakhtin (1981):

And not all words for just anyone submit equally easily to this appropriation, to this seizure and transformation into private property: many words stubbornly resist, others remain alien, sound foreign in the mouth of the one who appropriated them and who now speaks them; they cannot be assimilated into his context and fall out of it; it is as if they put themselves in quotation marks against the will of the speaker. Language is not a neutral medium that passes freely and easily into the private property of the speaker's intentions; it is populated – overpopulated – with the intention of others. Expropriating it, forcing it to submit to one's own intentions and accents, is a difficult and complicated process. (p. 294)

Bakhtin's point was that utterances are often not easily and smoothly appropriated by speakers or writers. Instead, there is often resistance and some form of such resistance is the rule rather than the exception. Seen from this perspective, Minho forced all socially and ideologically alien and distant worlds to speak about themselves in their own language and in their own style as manifested in his frequent use of quotation marks – but his discursive self built a superstructure over these languages made up of his own intentions and accents, which then became dialogically linked with them. Minho “encase[d] his own thought in the image of another’s language without doing violence to the freedom of that language or to its own distinctive uniqueness” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 420). Minho’s discourse about himself and about his world fused organically with the authors’ discourse about them and their world. Such an internal fusion of two points of view, two intentions and two expressions in one utterance offered a living dialogic resistance to the intentions of the other; an unresolved conversation began to sound in the image itself and the image became an open, living, mutual interaction between worlds, points of view, and accents. This made it possible for other participants to re-accentuate the image, to adopt various attitudes toward the argument sounding within the image, to take various positions in this argument, and, consequently, to vary the interpretations of the image itself.

Let us look at how the teacher, Nancy (#2) responded to the image Minho created in his text. She responded to Minho’s query by injecting acclamation (“Wonderful, Minho. You are highlighting the fragile and difficult aspect that such an

approach to discussion requires. I love your words”). In a discourse-based interview, Nancy commented on how she could easily embody his words when she first read Minhø’s message: “He had chosen words that were almost poetic for expressing his ideas, so I couldn’t help but comment on that” (October 9).

Nancy further explained her take on Minhø’s words as follows:

I was responding to Minhø. He says, now, it’s not that I agreed completely with the whole comment because like that part, “These were somewhat new and may be still new to the deepest part of my mind,” I loved that. I don’t know. It’s so real. I felt very much like he was very self-reflective, I would call that a self-reflective comment. And I know about that, I feel as if he’s disagreeing with the ideas, he’s disagreeing that in Korea, you could have as much dialogue as, let’s say, Hammer is having in his article, where the teacher that was learning to be more dialogic. But that doesn’t mean that the basic ideas don’t apply to the description of the classroom in Korea. In fact, that’s exactly what these articles are about. If you have a very traditional sort of classroom, that’s especially where these concepts are supposed to be applicable. So, that’s what I would have said, you know, if I had had a long chance to talk to him. But I didn’t mean to say that at all, because I felt as if he was asking such an honest question, and his last part “I think high of ‘dialogic approach in education’ but at the same time...” you know, that was like, “Oh my god. He is authentic” and at the same time, he is bringing in these words from our reading, “heteroglossia” and “pluralism.” And then to say it as bondage like you are caught, I just thought it was wonderful. (Discourse-based Interview, October 9)

It is very interesting to see how Minhø’s words that sounded so evocative and authentic to Nancy made her respond the way she did. Instead of serving as a teacher who might have wanted to challenge Minhø’s ideas by asking a question like “Why not applicable to Korean educational settings?,” Nancy positioned herself as one of the students in psycholinguistics class who was observing everyday language phenomenon.

There are times when people say things that just grab your heart. You just have to comment on the words that have a lot of power. So I had to say something. Minhø had chosen words that were almost poetic for expressing his ideas. So I couldn’t help but comment on that. I was just being a psycholinguistics student at the moment when I was saying that. (Discourse-based Interview, October 9)

The next speaker, Morgan (#3), in turn, chose to comment on Nancy’s choice of words. Just as Nancy noticed Minhø’s words, Morgan noticed Nancy’s words and injected acclamation (“What an incredible turn of phrase!”). Morgan reported that

even though it was not technically on the subject of what the group was discussing, that turn of phrase (“I love your words”) Nancy made in response to Minho’s message caught her eyes very much. As a lover and a close observer of the linguistic phenomena occurring around her everyday life, Morgan was fascinated by the way Nancy used the language because she found Nancy’s language very communicative in this CMC context. In a discourse-based interview, Morgan made the following comment:

I am always fascinated by the way our language is changing. The way people communicate is changing. I know that I very much change language in a very non-standard way. For example, I tend to use nouns as verbs. And that kind of thing really catches my eyes. I was told fairly often that that’s not the right way to say that. Yes, but language is about communicating. What I said communicating is a lot better than the standard way of saying. Her phrase communicates very well. (Discourse-based Interview, September 19)

For Morgan, what was significant to her at the moment was not so much to get involved in the discussion of the given topic, but to make a meta-discourse comment on the kinds of discourse that had just evolved in this speech activity.

Jason’s message (#4) in response to Minho’s query presents an interesting case of appropriation. In a discourse-based interview, Jason admitted that his heart was grabbed by the two terms Minho brought up at the end of his message, *pluralism* and *heteroglossia*, rather than by the whole content of the message Minho was originally trying to convey. Even though those two words were in fact cited in one of the assigned readings, he did not recognize them as he was reading the article. Only when Jason saw the words embedded in Minho’s text, did the words begin to resonate and make an enormous impact on his ideological world. Jason explained this:

What really got me was that very last paragraph there, “pluralism” and “heteroglossia.” Those two terms were so perfect, “You know what, you got it.” This is great in theory, but, in practice, it will work for only some. There are always those few students who will get it no matter what you do. The idea isn’t to create new things so that a few students will get it. We encourage most students to get it. So it is too ideal. I thought, “You are right on.” I thought this is exactly what we need to point out. The solution isn’t the global solution. So actually I added to his too ideal thread because the term, heteroglossia, triggered the whole idea of how each individual student is different. (Discourse-based Interview, October 18)

From this comment, one can see that Jason was not directly addressing Minho's message as a whole. Instead, Jason, snatching the words Minho had cited from the reading, *pluralism* and *heteroglossia* and reaccenting them with his intentions, bathed the original image in a more skeptical light, as was clearly manifested at the end of his text: "The theoretical construct of classroom dialogia is an ideal every teacher (irrespective of the course content) should aim for. I think it is up to us as teachers to now take the next step...how to practically implement the construct into classes where it only exists as theory. I believe that it won't be as easy as it sounds (sorry about the skepticism)..."

As Bakhtin (1986) noted, each utterance is filled with various kinds of responsive reactions to other utterances of the given sphere of speech communication. These responsive reactions can take various forms. For example, others' utterances as a whole can be introduced directly into the context of the utterance, or one may introduce only individual words or sentences, which then act as representatives of the whole utterance. Here, Jason's reaction to Minho's utterance might be the one in which Jason introduced only individual words to his ideological world of text. Note that even though Jason admitted that the words *pluralism* and *heteroglossia* triggered a whole idea of how individuals are not homogeneous, he did not use the terms verbatim in his message. Rather, the individual words that had been assimilated into Jason's ideological world were re-accentuated in a skeptical tone.

For Vivien (#4), Minho's message served as a locus where she repositioned herself in this particular CMC activity that had already generated several topic threads before this "Too Ideal" thread. By the time Vivien saw Minho's message, she had already posted something about the common theme running through all the articles of the week in another topic thread titled "Common Theme." In that "Common Theme" thread, Vivien argued why respect should be the core construct of any classroom learning and teaching practices. After posing her thought on the theme, however, Vivien was mindful that she sounded too idealistic in there. When she saw Minho's message and Jason's response to it in this "Too Ideal" thread that had just unfold, Vivien was glad that she could have

another opportunity to reposition herself in relation to all the constructs she had talked about before. In her message here, Vivien agreed with Minhó that all the new constructs may not be appropriate to certain environments. Then, borrowing Jason's words (note that Jason's skeptical tone changed into a rather encouraging statement), Vivien finished her utterance with a compromising conclusion ("And Minhó, I can related (a little) to what you're talking about. But, like Jason said, it's an ideal we should strive for"). In a discourse-based interview, Vivien described her situation as follows:

I thought that what Minhó said was relevant at that time because the first thing that I thought about when I read all that stuff was, "This sounds great, but can it work?" I mean, obviously it works in some situations, but can it work in every situation? So, as I was writing this, blar blar blar respect, I was also mindful. I was aware that that's an ideal kind of situation. I mean, respect can be everywhere. It doesn't have to be inquiry and dialogic class, but giving students respect so much so that they can take control over their own learning, I guess. And then I thought I don't want to sound so idealistic here because I am not. I can be skeptical too. And then when Minhó wrote this, I thought that's good because this is true too. (Discourse-based Interview, November 26)

In this interview, Vivien further revealed that she wanted to write more than that compromising comment. She reported that she did not say what she was completely thinking at the time in her message because she did not want to offend Minhó, given that she knew little about his background. She explained the complexity involved in the construction of her text as follows:

Actually I wanted to say more, but I didn't want to offend him. I felt like in a way when people do say, "Oh, this isn't gonna work," that a lot of times, not specifically Minhó, but sometimes I hear people say, "Well, that won't work. I am not gonna try." So when I responded, I wanted to say, "I completely agree with you. This situation is ideal and our real-life situation is not ideal. There are a lot of restrictions and all of these. Yet that doesn't excuse us from trying." But I didn't say that. If I hadn't been responding directly to Minhó, I might have said it. But I didn't because I didn't mean to imply that he is maybe one of these people. (Discourse-based Interview, November 26)

Vivien attributed her withdrawal from what she was completely thinking at the time to her belief in the respect for students.

...that Jason and Minhó, addressing people like that kind of goes back to my belief in that respect for students in my classes. I thought it extremely important

to learn all my students' names. Even if there were 150 students a semester, even if the names were foreign, that was important. I think it is important to address people by their names most of the time, and I guess that carries over to this situation where, I mean, there's a lot of politeness strategies going on that I see. So I address the people who make comments that are interesting and striking to me. It might restrict saying what I might completely be thinking, but I'd rather sacrifice some of that to continue the kind of first-name polite style. I'm not very confrontational, so I don't want to engage in confrontation. I'm sure we can disagree, but I want to be careful about the way I say something. (Discourse-based Interview, November 26)

In a way Vivien had achieved what she originally wanted to achieve in her utterance by responding to Minho's query: to show the group members she "can be skeptical too." At the same time she was working through a tension between what she was completely thinking about others' words and what she wanted the actual realization of her utterance to be in response to others' words.

Morgan's response (#6) to all the messages posted before her shows once again how others' words can be reformulated in a new ideologically saturated world of the given speaker. Morgan, as an educational psychology student who was conversing with FLE students (Minho, Jason, and Vivien) in this topic thread, recognized that the conversation was geared to foreign language education contexts, given that Minho's original message was about whether a dialogic classroom is feasible in Korean educational contexts. In her message here, Morgan wanted to direct the conversation back to the issue at hand she was facing in her own classes in the U. S. by redefining culture ("What I think we tend to forget is that this matter of varied dialogue styles isn't necessarily defined by language boundaries"). It is interesting to see how she came to negotiate her audience's interests (especially FLE students) with her own, directing the conversation to the way she wanted the group to go further even though she felt that she "was being divorced" from the other speakers in the group. She described her situation as follows:

Kind of after writing this, I felt I was being divorced. You know, because I was coming back to the idea that culture isn't necessarily defined by national boundaries. We have many foreign language education students. You know, a bunch of students who are navigating this college from a second language point of

view. At the same time, I have also dealt with in my own teaching and in my personal experiences, having to become aware of culture that's hard to define. For example, in my current job I deal with portions of the college student body that don't fit into college culture. But they are Americans. They are raised here, they went to high school here, but they still don't. This is just as foreign to them as it is to one of international students. (Discourse-based Interview, October 22)

The last contributor to the thread, Seunghee, who was another FLE student and who came from Korea, snatched Morgan's message back to her own context in message #7 ("I agree with Minho, esp. because we're from the same culture"). In a discourse-based interview, Seunghee explained why she chose to respond to Minho's message in the first place:

Minho wrote a message that I could sympathize with, because he talked about why the dialogic class is hard to realize in Korean educational contexts. This is the area I could say based on my own experiences. You know, when American classmates write their message here, they clearly connect the things they learned in readings with their life experiences. I couldn't do that most of the time in this discussion. But when I saw Minho's message, I thought this is the one where I could stand equally side by side with American peers. I could tell a story about my high school teachers and college professors and how I have experienced American classes as an international student. (Discourse-based Interview, October 19)

From her comment, one can see that Seunghee turned her background, her sense of the past, into resources with which she could position herself equally with English-speaking peers in this chain of communication.

## **Commentary**

Different interests and motives of all the participants in this "Too Ideal" topic thread constituted the intertextual rhythm of CMC discourse. Minho's ambivalent feelings about the constructs that the authors of the assigned readings created and his desire to let his American peers know where he came from and how he felt about the constructs, Nancy's observation of Minho's language use as a psycholinguistic example, Morgan's fascination with how Nancy's particular turn of phrase was communicated in



this particular speech activity, Jason's impression of the two theoretical constructs Minh brought up from the reading, Vivien's desire to reposition herself on the issue the group had discussed, Morgan's desire to expand the discussion further to include her own context, and Seunghee's affiliation with the situation that Minh described in the first message had all compelled the participants to select for themselves what was significant in their reading and writing of the texts and reaccent it with their own expressions and evaluative tones.

As Bakhtin (1986) noted, "as regards to a given question, in a given matter, and so forth, the utterance occupies a particular definitive position in a given sphere of communication" (p. 91). Therefore, it is impossible to determine the position of any utterance without correlating it with other positions. Each utterance in this CMC activity was filled with various kinds of responsive reactions to other utterances. These reactions in this chain of CMC communication took various forms: In most cases, the whole ideological world saturated in others' utterances was introduced directly or indirectly into the context of the speaker (as in the case of utterances produced by Minh, Nancy, Vivien, Morgan (#6), and Seunghee), or in some cases, only individual words or sentences were introduced, which then acted as representatives of the whole utterance (as in the case of Jason's appropriation of two terms "pluralism and heteroglossia" and Morgan's (#3) meta-discourse comment on Nancy's turn of phrase, "I love your words"). Both whole utterances and individual words could retain their alien expression, but they could also be re-accentuated ironically, skeptically, and reverently. That is, others' utterances were repeated with varying degrees of reinterpretation. Here, we see an important and typical case: very frequently the expression of the participants' utterance in CMC was determined not only, and sometimes not so much, by the referentially semantic content of that utterance, but also by others' utterances on the same topic to which they were responding or with which they were problematizing. They also determined the participants' emphasis on "certain elements, repetition, their selection of harsher (or, conversely, milder) expressions, a contentious (or, conversely, conciliatory) tone, and so

forth” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 92). Bakhtin’s (1981) words might adequately sum up what was observed in the study in term of the rhythm of CMC conversation:

Each utterance is filled with echoes and reverberations of other utterances to which it is related by the communality of the sphere of speech communication. Each utterance refutes, affirms, supplements, and relies on the others, presupposes them to be known, and somehow takes them into account. In this sense, every utterance must be regarded primarily as a response to preceding utterances of the given sphere of discursive practice embedded in a particular community. (p. 430)

### **Intertextual Abductive Musings**

Intertextual dimension in CMC allowed members of the community to pull together disparate arguments and examples, file them electronically, archive and examine them, and pull them up for later reference. This in turn allowed the participants to create a broader base of what Shank and Cunningham (1996) called “abductive rules” to bring to bear on any relevant discussion in a “multiloguing” CMC context. In the CMC activities I observed in this study, three discussion groups were working within the same time span on Blackboard and the participants assigned to each group could access the other groups’ discussion if they so wished. The multi-access availability of information within the overall dialogue on the assigned readings facilitated the hybridization of information.

Bakhtin explained how the meaning of one’s utterance can undergo fundamental changes against a different dialogizing background. He explained this phenomenon as follows:

The speech of another, once enclosed in a context, is – no matter how accurately transmitted – always subject to certain semantic changes. The context embracing another’s word is responsible for its dialogizing background, whose influence can be very great. Given the appropriate methods for framing, one may bring about fundamental changes even in another’s utterance accurately quoted. (p. 340)

Bakhtin’s observation that one’s utterance accurately quoted went through fundamental changes in the process of transmission to the different dialogizing background seemed to be even more feasible in the multiloguing CMC context. The fact that the participants were operating within a series of parallel sets of discussion in the multilogue setting and

that the class consisted of people with wide-ranging interests and areas of expertise allowed for the synthesis of meaning in often nontraditional ways. For example, sometimes the pursuit of meaning in one group took off on its own merry abductive way in another group, leading to strange and unusual fruit.

The following excerpt presents a case in which a particular text that had been implanted into another discussion forum contributed to producing unexpectedly productive fruit, totally different from the meaning sought for in the original discussion forum.

Date: Thu Nov 14 2002 5:59 pm  
Author: Ming  
Subject: Chatting language VS. Writing language  
Current Forum: Group 2

"Author: Nancy

So let's talk about that, about online chatting as a form of writing. I do like so much how such writing is a sort of hybrid form and, by its very hybridity, can help us understand better what we mean by writing, what we mean by oral language use. So the kids in that article were learning to write in order to learn (what people in the writing field call "epistemic writing") and they were using their obviously well developed skills as communicators online to learn from each other. I do so much see that sort of chatting as a wonderful place to watch how social factors interweave with cognitive factors as one puts words to thoughts and types them into a network. A final thought: Don't you love the creative use of language these kids engage?"

Dear Nancy, I hope you don't mind that I "steal" your words from group three discussion. I have something to say about this, but instead of replying this there, I think maybe I need to contribute to my group first.

Being an everyday Internet user, I have been used to the on-line chat language. Now, when I see "lol", I know that means "laugh out loud"; when I see "btw", I know it means "by the way". I sometimes use those language when I am on-line, too. However, I know very clearly that those language belongs in the Internet chat. I will not adopt the language into my writing work. Well, that's me, but not for my former students in the senior high school. When I gave them a composition assignment, some of them use u instead of you, ppl instead of people, or something like that in it. I also saw they add the facial expression like :-), :-(, or :-b in the end of the paragraph once in a while. At first, I thought it very cute, but then, my second thought is that I began to wonder how much this kind of chat language will affect the language learning. As we know, nowadays, most students start to use computer when they are very young, and many of them have on-line chat experience. When they are

using them, I guess they also process their thoughts in the kind of language through their cognition process. Don't you think this will decrease a student's vocabulary learning? Has anyone seen any similar writing from your students here?

Ming transmitted Nancy's whole utterance from the Group 3 forum into her utterance here in Group 2, using Nancy's utterance as a sort of background information for her topic about how much chatting language would affect vocabulary learning.

Let us first see what motivated Ming to conduct such a "non-traditional" act of abducting Nancy's message from another group (Group 3) to start a new conversation in her own group (Group 2). In a discourse-based interview, Ming explained her motivation as follows:

In our group, Nancy posted a question about how the social view of writing meshes with the cognitive view, but I didn't know how to respond to her question. I was like, "This is not something I can answer." You know, I'm not very good at comparison of authors. For me, reading these articles, I have to be very honest with that, I wasn't quite getting the main idea of the articles. I knew what they were talking about, but I found myself not really getting what is the main focus of the articles. And Nancy's question was very challenging especially because she wanted us to compare the articles to the last week's readings. And I found Dyson's article especially hard to read. After I read one or two pages, I was like, "Oh, I have to stop because I don't know about the theoretical constructs." I finished the on-line chat article first. It was the easiest one for me to read, so I went back to the Blackboard. I felt that reading other people's opinions can help me to read and understand the article. So I tried to read other groups' messages since in our group we didn't have many messages. I found that my group was very slow. Other groups had a lot of messages. In group 3 I found one message that I wanted to respond. They talked about chat language. That reminded me of my teaching experiences, so I wanted to start a new conversation. (Discourse-based Interview, November 22)

For Ming, CMC's intertextual dimension allowed her to go ahead and read other groups' messages when she could not find messages to which she could respond in her own group. When she started a new thread titled "Chatting language VS Writing language" in Group 2 by directly borrowing Nancy's message from Group 3, she did not bring all the intertextual history embedded in the discussion context of Group 3. Moreover, she used Nancy's utterance simply as background information that would help

set the stage for her own topic. In fact, Ming developed her own idea about how much chatting language would affect vocabulary learning, which was a totally different issue from the one addressed in Nancy's utterance in Group 3. As a strategy to develop her own ideas about how much chatting language would affect vocabulary learning based on her own previous teaching experience, she used Nancy's message as a resource, but appropriated only partially what Nancy had to say in her original message. In a discourse-based interview, Ming admitted that what Nancy said at the end of her message ("Don't you love the creative use of language these kids engage?") prompted her to develop her idea about how this creative power of chatting language might negatively affect vocabulary learning. In posting her message, Ming experienced vulnerability involved in borrowing others' words from another discussion group. In a discourse-based interview, Ming described her feeling at the time as follows:

Actually, I was not sure if I could do that. At first I thought, I should say, "Let's just talk about this." I mean, the idea about chatting language and vocabulary learning, but that's not a very good beginning of my topic because actually if I just say my experiences without any beginning comment, they may feel weird like, "Where does it come from?" My strategy was to present someone's ideas first, but I was not sure I could do that. (Discourse-based Interview, November 22)

This expressed vulnerability was almost a test to see what would happen. Her topic initiation generated nine responses. Notably, all seven participants of the group responded. Looking at just a few messages that followed Ming's will reveal how the whole conversation went in the direction Ming intended. Some shared Ming's concern about how it might decrease vocabulary learning, agreeing with what Ming had to say about the topic (#3 and #6), and others supplemented, or even challenged her idea (#2, #4, and #5), with all talking about how the creative power of chat language would affect or not affect vocabulary learning.

#2

Date: Thu Nov 14 2002 8:33 pm

Author: Nancy

Subject: Re: Chatting language VS. Writing language

Love it that you borrowed my message from Group 3 (sneaky but legal!!)

I know what you mean, we always worry that newcomers to a discourse community will not learn how to do things well in the new discourse community. It might be that if they don't adopt the correct practices, they'll get rejected. Yet, I do think we could come to see these new ways of expressing as new vocabulary. If you know what's meant by lol then you're broader in your ability to join many groups. It could be that after a while we will see things like "lolling so hard I cried". Sort of like when we started to see "Dot comers" as a new expression in the media. I think it's all that creative power of language.

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#3

Date: Fri Nov 15 2002 3:53 am

Author: Eunjoo

Subject: Re: Chatting language VS. Writing language

I had same feeling with Ming. When I got email from one of my students, she used lots of online chatting terms such as btw, lol, u, ... and symbols which I could not understand at all. When I read her email, I did not like her way of writing because it was too abstract for me to understand her writing. She was a middle schooler in here, so probably she used lots of new and popular chatting terms which seemed to be used among her peers. At that time, I was wondering if she knew all correct English spelling and usage... Her writing was not totally textual at least for me. So I think, if a person does not know chatting language and doesn't get a right meaning, how this creative use of language would be effective?

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#4

Date: Fri Nov 15 2002 9:29 am

Author: Jason

Subject: Re: Chatting language VS. Writing language

I've always had a passion for language acquisition... I never thought much about it in terms of CMC vocabulary, however. But I must unhesitatingly reply, "WHY NOT?!" Every field has specialized terminology. So, chatting must too. [I wonder if 'newbies' to computer chats go through a "silent period"]

Honestly, I don't think that using this form of discourse will affect face-to-face communication (but that's just my opinion). Let me use my daughter as an example:

My daughter loves Elmo. And as we all know (come on, admit it you know this but are just ashamed to admit it), Elmo always refers to himself in the third person... "Elmo loves..." instead of "I love." Or worse, cookie monster, who uses the objective case as the subjective case: "Me want cookie!"

Even though Anna watches Sesame street 2 or 3 times daily, she knows to differentiate between their language and communicating with me or my wife. I've never once heard her use structures similar to those less than grammatical forms she hears there.

So, by using chat text, wouldn't children learn a language [or language subset] for a specific purpose rather than a learning one form as an overarching blanket for all?

What do others think?

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#5

Date: Fri Nov 15 2002 3:11 pm

Author: Stacy

Subject: Re: Chatting language VS. Writing language

Going back to Ming's original comment, I also had a similiar experience in the class that I am teaching this semester. My students are required to complete 10 online modules throughout the semester. They must complete several activities within the modules (by typing answers to several questions), print them out, and then turn them into me. In the beginning, I was getting lots of "chat" like language. They were using all lower case letters and/or no punctuation, they were using "u" instead of you, and I was getting lots of :) 's too! I was a little surprised by this. I thought that college students would know better than to turn in assignments that were written in this way. I brought this up with my class and we discussed that it was not acceptable work given the assignment, and I asked them if they turned it work similiar to this in other classes. They let me know that the fact that they were completing the activities online made them feel like they could write in this way. They were bringing elements from one discourse into another, when in reality, it was not acceptable to do so. (They have stopped doing this now!). The purpose of these modules was not to "chat with me", but to demonstrate how they are applying the concepts that they were learning in class. These students inappropriately mixed the two discourses.

Ming, back to your original question, I don't think that this will affect student's vocabulary learning, because hopefully they will be involved in many other types of communication that will force them to use different types of "language". I do agree that kids these days are using computers at younger ages, but they are still involved in conversations with parents and siblings, they still have the classroom experience, they still read (hopefully, but it seems that kids don't read as much as they used to, a whole different issue), ... All of these other situations should help them gain the needed vocabulary. Now, the challenge is to ensure that students learn when it is appropriate to communicate using different sets of vocab, or different "languages". Anyone else have thoughts on this?

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#6

Date: Fri Nov 15 2002 4:44 pm

Author: Seunghee

Subject: Re: Chatting language VS. Writing language

Good point, Ming!

Though mostly my chatting experiences went along with my generations, I am accustomed to the concerns for bad influence of computer-use on children's lang. acquisition. One of these concerns is related to "Orthogrphy". When I was a kid, I had to write with pencils. In the beginning year of school, I practiced a lot to write basic spellings with pencils. By that practice, I could acquire the spelling systems of Korean.

Same things happen when it comes to contracted forms of lang in Korea. If kids are exposed to "chatting" so early, I concern that it will impact on their acquiring right form of spelling systems and Orthograpy. Therefore, I personally think that incorporating computer in lnaguage education should be delayed until the point in which children can reach a maturity in basic lang. use.

Thus far, I have shown how Ming's borrowing of Nancy's message to another group's discussion sparked a flurry of ideas from other members in Ming's group. As a form of comparison, I want to compare how the original message written by Nancy was situated in Group 3. In fact, Nancy's message when embedded in Group 3 assumed a more serious tone because the concept had already been developed by the time Nancy wrote this particular message. It had a different intertextual history that was already evolved in the previous messages. Nancy's original message was well into the web of discussion first initiated by Rita, followed by Nancy's initial response, and Hillary's response.

#1

Date: Thu Nov 14 2002 9:09 am

Author: Rita

Subject: my evolving response to the chat room article

Current Forum: Group 3

I was sold on the use of chat rooms in language arts programs. It seemed like a good idea to me notwithstanding some of the disadvantages that the authors reported. And suddenly when they moved on to chat rooms in Science, I was incredulous, doubtful that it could ever work. Why did I immediately shift allegiances? Why do I hold science (and math) in such a mysterious, fearful regard that I thought it was inappropriate to have informal chat room discussions about such lofty, sacred, impenetrable subjects? Certainly you have to have a teacher to transmit the mystery. Certainly students couldn't construct meaning on their own. Then suddenly, a few paragraphs into the discussion, I was liberated by the idea of science in a chat room - - - informal language like 'is is the moon?' interrupted by brb (bathroom breaks)



- - - it all sounded so novel and appealing to me! Of course, the authors did express concerns that the use of chat rooms didn't encourage the students to change their positions towards scientific authority. But, at least it's a start. One that's very over-due!

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#2

Date: Thu Nov 14 2002 11:28 am

Author: Nancy

Subject: Re: my evolving response to the chat room article

An interesting point, Rita. We often think of the response to literature as allowing for more latitude, as more obviously a place for construction of meaning. But, it's just the same with math and science. If the science is really going to stick, it HAS to be that there is a way for the students really to negotiate and have dialogue with the ideas being presented in science. Now, I'll grant you that the discourse over the science content did not seem all that advanced -- I wasn't quite sure what the students were supposed to do when they discussed the moon -- still, why shouldn't they bring up their own questions, set themselves up for observation/data gathering, and then discuss the results. It's like book talk: ask a question, go back to the text to gether evidence for your point of view, and present your conclusion for discussion by your group. No?

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#3

Date: Thu Nov 14 2002 2:24 pm

Author: Hillary

Subject: Re: my evolving response to the chat room article

Nancy, well I think that if you are thinking on online conversations as talk, then I would agree with you. If you are thinking of it as writing, then it has a different connotation...or at least I can see why some might think that it would. ...

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#4

Date: Thu Nov 14 2002 3:05 pm

Author: Nancy

Subject: Re: my evolving response to the chat room article

So let's talk about that, about online chatting as a form of writing. I do like so much how such writing is a sort of hybrid form and, by its very hybridity, can help us understand better what we mean y writing, what we mean by oral language use. So the kids in that article were learning to write in order to learn (what people in the writing field call "epistemic writing") and they were using their obviously well developed skills as communicators online to learn from each other. I do so much see that sort of chatting as a wonderful place to watch how social factors interweave with cognitive factors as one puts words to thoughts and types them into a network. A final thought: Don't you love the creative use of language these kids engage?

In message #1, when Rita started by mentioning the difference between science and literature, Nancy in message #2 was trying to answer that science writing is not so different from any other conversation. In a discourse-based interview, Nancy described her intention as follows:

When Rita wrote this, I really liked to take that opportunity to say that science writing is not that different from telling a story, or from having a conversation. So I was wanting to highlight the similarity in any communication because that's what the whole class is about. So in my comment, I said that. Especially what those teachers asked their kids to do was very much like responding to a book. So I wanted to put that out. (Discourse-based Interview, November 21)

When Hillary came in with this comment ("Nancy, well I think that if you are thinking on online conversations as talk, then I would agree with you. If you are thinking of it as writing, then it has a different connotation...or at least I can see why some might think that it would"), her definition of online conversation was a little "foggy" at the time, as she described in her interview:

I guess right here I was thinking in terms of me outside of a graduate community at first. I was like, "Okay I see what you are saying, but outside the academia I can also see why people would say that, 'well sort of,' if you are thinking of it as writing." So my definition of it is kind of foggy, so that's kind of what I was thinking here. (Discourse-based Interview, November 20)

Hillary's message made Nancy wonder what Hillary was thinking about the nature of online conversation. Nancy recalled:

I wasn't still quite sure about her point. So when I responded to it, I remember thinking to myself, "I'm not going to address it exactly, but I can't unravel it right here." In a way, what I was trying to do is not to impose too strongly one point or the other yet. I wanted to let it develop. I said it like, "Let's talk about that about online chatting as a form of writing." So I kind of wanted it to be, it's neither talk nor writing. It's a hybrid form. I just thought that it's going to be a way to get them to talk more about that. (Discourse-based Interview, November 21)

With this intertextual history, Nancy's utterance when situated in Group 3 hit the evolving conversation very differently than it did when the very same utterance was assimilated into Ming's context. As the participant Nancy herself commented, the original message attached to the chain of communication in Group 3 "sounded more

serious in a way, because it had already been discussed.” When Ming imported Nancy’s utterance to Group 2, she did not bring all the intertextual history attached to it. The participants in Group 2, therefore, could not hear Nancy talking to herself all along while producing her utterance in Group 3: “So, if we are talking about that chatroom article in this following way, is it a form of writing? Let’s discuss that. Is it epistemic writing or is it all of these different things I said?” (Discourse-based Interview, November 21). The seriousness of Nancy’s voice here was totally missing when abducted by Ming in another group and put to use against a different dialogizing background. It was transformed into a merry musing in Ming’s text, which in turn triggered an unexpectedly productive chain of communication in her own discussion forum.

### **Intertextual Links across Time and Space: Homecoming Festival**

The intertextual dimension of CMC allowed for the eternal renewal of meanings in all new contexts. What Bakhtin calls “great time” (1986, p. 169) – infinite and unfinalized dialogue in which no meaning dies – was frequently invoked in the chain of asynchronous communication the students were engaged in as part of the whole repertoire of classroom activities including oral discussion, synchronous discussion, projects, and other classroom tasks. Bakhtin (1986) explained how meaning can cross the boundaries of time and space and, in the process, experience changes or transformation:

There is neither a first nor a last word and there are no limits to the dialogic context (it extends into the boundless past and the boundless future). Even past meanings, that is, those born in the dialogue of past centuries, can never be stable (finalized, ended once and for all) – they will always change (be renewed) in the process of subsequent, future development of the dialogue. At any moment in the development of the dialogue there are immense, boundless masses of forgotten contextual meanings, but at certain moments of the dialogue’s subsequent development along the way they are recalled and invigorated in renewed form (in a new context). Nothing is absolutely dead: every meaning will have its homecoming festival. (p. 170)

Bakhtin demonstrated that all communication is connected to a concrete situation or context and is thus only a moment in the continuous process of verbal communication

that cannot be isolated from the historical flow of utterances. Bakhtin further specified that such communication then,

exists among other meanings as a link in the chain of meaning, which in its totality is the only thing that can be real. In historical life, this chain continues infinitely, and therefore each individual link in it is renewed again and again, as though it were being reborn. (p. 146)

Halasek (1999) pointed out that the linear qualities of a chain are far too limiting an image for what Bakhtin was expressing and should somehow be translated into a three dimensional, dynamic image more akin to etherspace. With that advice, we can grasp more fully the creative potential of this construct. The infinite relatedness of the dialogic context from the boundless past to the boundless future is an essential element in Bakhtinian thought. That is, the dialogue is continuously being renewed and reinvigorated in a new context across time and space.

Here, I will present several intertextual examples that crossed boundaries of time and space, focusing on how, as the students engaged in the second asynchronous discussion, they renewed the meaning they had previously sought for in other related classroom activities such as the first asynchronous discussion, the synchronous discussions, and their psycholinguistic projects.

As the most typical example, one can see that topics, problems, and issues of interest to the students recurred across the two asynchronous discussions. Even though they were not necessarily continuations of conversation from one seminar to the next, the intertextual reference was very common. This can be exemplified in the following excerpt in which Vivien in the second asynchronous discussion invented the term “budding scientists” (#2) based on what she could remember from the first asynchronous discussion about what one of the authors of that week, Hammer, called “seeds of mature science” (#1).

#1: An excerpt from the first asynchronous discussion  
Date: Thu Oct 3 2002 1:49 pm  
Author: Vivien  
Subject: Common theme

I would like to talk about what I see as a common theme that runs through all these articles. Obviously, there is a common theme or else we wouldn't be reading them together. I'm not simply talking about classroom talk or discourse, but the thing that makes it work in these classes. There are probably a number of reasons these teachers and classes were successful, but the one I would like to focus on is what I will loosely term, respect. In the Christoph article, we see that creating "an ethos of involvement and respect" was one of the goals of the teacher. We often see where students respect the teacher and I have no doubt that teachers respect and love all their students, but somehow letting the students in on this secret of mutual respect seems so important. I like the line from this article which says something about treating the students as people. It seems like such a simple thing, but very powerful.

This notion of respect extends to the Hammer article, but not so blatantly. I mean, it was not expressed as one of the goals of the teacher in his physics class, but it certainly seems to be what drives what he does. By allowing the students to theorize and not challenge their answers, Hammer seems to be fostering a sense of respect even though the students are frequently misguided in their theories. To further this point, Hammer talks about exploring what he calls the "**seeds of mature science**." Simply by acknowledging that his students could engage in mature science and the fact that the students did it shows mutual respect...

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#2: An excerpt from the second asynchronous discussion

Date: Thu Nov 14 2002 2:21 pm

Author: Vivien

Subject: Re: my evolving response to the chat room article

I was also drawn to the chat room article. I thought it was completely compelling as I did not necessarily agree with the author's list of disadvantages. I share the math/science phobia of Rita so I am somehow impressed with what the students did with the science topic. Maybe I do not have high expectations of the inquiry that goes on in science classrooms and see their discussion as the beginnings of a shift. Like, Hammer, I am inclined to think of these students as **budding scientists**. I was, however, truly impressed with their discussion of the books they were reading--even if one student took over the role of the leader and initiated an IRE sequence. For some reason, when one of the students was acting in that capacity, I did not see it as a true IRE sequence. I just saw it as someone stepping up to take on the role of the moderator. Perhaps without that prodding, the discussions would have died out. Am I missing something here?

Vivien wrote message #1 on Oct. 3 in the first asynchronous discussion. In talking about respect as a common theme that was running through all the articles for the week, Vivien cited "seeds of mature science" from Hammer's article. Using the construct, she

came up with a metaphor for describing students in the chatting room in the physics class, “budding scientists” in her second asynchronous discussion on Nov. 4. The previous words (“seeds of mature science”) were recalled and invigorated in a renewed form (“budding scientists”) in a new context. In a discourse-based interview, Vivien described how what she had previously read and discussed in the class often came back again to have a new life in a new context.

... I thought that Hammer in that article was talking about that, the students discussed a whole lot of theories that were wrong, but Hammer called this “seeds of mature science.” I thought, “Why couldn’t we call these students ‘budding scientists’?” It just comes to my mind. (Discourse-based Interview, November 26)

Not only did the first asynchronous discussion spread over to the second asynchronous discussion as in the case of Vivien’s intertextual link between the two, other kinds of speech activities embedded in this class were alluded to and actively sought out for meaning in the second asynchronous discussion. The next example shows how Alicia dug up the term “comprehensive” that her third synchronous discussion group had come up with in discussing the “reading wars” (#2) and brought the idea up to her second asynchronous discussion group in the discussion of writing perspectives (#1).

#1: An excerpt from the second asynchronous discussion  
Date: Thu Nov 14 2002 11:06 pm  
Author: Alicia  
Subject: Perspectives

The discussion of writing perspectives ties me back into the reading wars. Do I dare go there? It reminds me of our last synchronous discussion. In the midst of a whole language/phonics debate, Kelly came up with the term “comprehensive” The term emerged when we were explaining that we do not teach one way or the other. We do a little of everything, a sampler platter. And, we also take into account what is successful. Sometimes it is not just a little of everything, but finding a way to match the individual children as well.

So in thinking of socio and cognitive perspectives. It seems it is a little of everything that should be addressed. Everyone wants to stand on one side or the other. Is there neutral ground?

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#2: An excerpt from the third synchronous discussion  
Date: October 31, 2002  
Group 4

Rita:  
kelly and alicia, dare i ask this, how would you label yourself? I know labels aren't necessary, but how would you describe your approach?

Alicia:  
ooooo..... i think i do a little of everything so i do not know how i would label myself. i just teach what i think works and what i believe doesnt- or really what i see working and what isnt with each student

Kelly:  
Rita: funny you ask that.. we were talking in our class last night about the "right term" We decided on "comprehensive" reading teacher.. that says everygthing that Alicia just posted.

Rita:  
alicia, that seems like such a logical solution. I wonder why the war is necessary. . .

Rita:  
kelly, i love the term comprehensive

Here, we can track Alicia's grappling with the given topic throughout the two different modes of written conversation and see a snapshot of the intertextual crossing-over. Before Alicia wrote message #1 in the second asynchronous discussion, there had already been an intense discussion going on in her group as to how writing is more than a cognitive activity. After reading all the students' messages before her, Alicia tried to synthesize what other people had to say about the topic and added her own insights to the discussion. She started by comparing this week's topic (writing perspectives) with the last synchronous discussion topic (reading wars). Then, using the insight garnered from that third synchronous discussion (#2) that had made a significant impression on her, Alicia reintroduced the term "comprehensive" to her asynchronous discussion group, indicative of the meaning reborn in a new context. In a discourse-based interview, Alicia admitted that the third synchronous discussion deeply affected her in her way of thinking enough to "dare to go there" again and dig up an artifact to seek meaning for the current discussion.

The following is another example in which meaning was renewed in a new context. Here, Kelly used her semester-long psycholinguistic project for the class, one of the integral parts of classroom activities, to understand and discuss the week's particular reading in the second asynchronous discussion.

#1: An excerpt from second asynchronous discussion

Date: Thu Nov 14 2002 10:35 pm

Author: Kelly

Subject: Re: In particular, Moje?

My psycholinguistic project is sort-of linked to this idea.. so I was fascinated with this article. It reminds me of the resistance movement of the 1960's. So many similarities. A group of young people with a distinctive dress, vocabulary, code, and ways of being that were challenges to "the establishment" and politically subversive. But yet those nonconformists all looked the same--long hair, beads, peace signs

We (mainstream America) celebrate the hippie culture now--especially the music and poetry of the time. I would wager that this will happen with the gansta culture.. it is already happening with mainstream white teenagers.

Here, Kelly was responding to Nancy's prompt about how Moje's article about gangsta kids' literacy practices explored the idea of resistance as a way to carve out an identity. Kelly was the first one in the group who responded to Nancy's prompt with an example drawn from her psycholinguistic project. In a discourse-based interview, Kelly explained how she came to invoke the meaning she had sought for in her psycholinguistic project in discussing Moje's article:

I happened to write about that in my psycholinguistic project. I wrote about hip-hop and rap and that sort of in-group and out-group things, that's what I was really interested in. I saw that prompt, I was like, "Yeah." I was really interested in that, so I wrote about my project. I was thinking about how as the article discussed, how it's not just language that's addressed, all other things were related. So I related that to how when back in 60s, the hippie culture was really seen as kind of counter-culture, and now almost part of legend. It's sort of an American way. It doesn't seem as radical as it used to be. Maybe some day the gangster, the dress code and all other stuff will be part of our culture. It won't seem so radical. That's what I was trying to say. (Discourse-based Interview, November 21)



## Commentary

Because all texts, as conceived by Bakhtin (1981), are utterances, and all utterances are linked to each other in the great heteroglot dialogue of dialogues constituted by all that has been said and all that will be said in history, the “origin” of a text is always another link in the long chain of its possible transmissions (p. xxxi). In all three examples, the students’ texts created in the second asynchronous discussion revealed what Bakhtin called “great time,” the eternal renewal of meanings in all new contexts. The way the students made intertextual links in great time seems to parallel Foucault’s (1970) methodology of archaeology as a way to explore the nature of knowledge. Foucault summarized his method by asking “What is being said in what was said?” (p. 28), a question that opened the path to exploring the nature of knowledge. Foucault questioned such basic assumptions such as what, exactly, is a book:

The frontiers of the book are never clear-cut: beyond the title, first lines and the last full stop, beyond its internal configuration and its autonomous form, it is caught up in a system of references to other books, other texts, other sentences: it is a node within a network. ... As soon as one questions that unity, it loses its self-evidence; it indicates itself, constructs itself only on the basis of a complex field of discourse. (p. 23)

Following his initial question of exploring “what was being said in what was said,” Foucault argued that a group of relations exists between statements and that what one must understand in archeological method is “the coexistence of these dispersed and heterogeneous statements; the systems that govern their division, the degree to which they depend upon one another, the way in which they interlock or exclude one another, the transformation that they undergo, and the play of their location, arrangement, and replacement” (p. 34). Foucault’s archaeology does not view discourses as a series of homogeneous events but looks at discursive formation at several possible levels within the very density of discourse; the levels of the statements themselves in their unique emergence. Porter (1986), in his exploration of Foucault, presented “discursive formations” and “discursive practices” as the constructive forces of texts, disciplines, institutions, and societies. Through the process of archeology, of digging into the “birth”

of discursive formations, perspective and assumptions are foregrounded for understanding. And so, Porter continued, students analyze discursive principles in order to understand the history of the discourse community or forum. The students (Vivien, Alicia, and Kelly) in this study made intertextual links across time and space, acting like Foucault's archeologists: They recalled and invigorated topics, problems, and issues of their interest in a renewed form in a new context.

### **Intertextual Balance between Centripetal and Centrifugal Forces**

According to Fairclough (1992), intertextuality entails an emphasis upon the heterogeneity of texts and a mode of analysis that highlights the diverse and often contradictory elements and threads that go to make up a chain of communication. Probing the complex and multiple languages that exist in any society, Bakhtin (1981) focused on the heteroglossic nature of the discourse, conceived as the place where struggles between centripetal forces whose aim is to centralize and unify and centrifugal forces whose purpose is to decentralize are played out in miniature. Bakhtin defined centripetal impulses as all of those "forces that serve to unify and centralize the verbal-ideological world" (p. 270). For example, an utterance works to bring unity to the heteroglossic "contradiction-ridden" (p. 272) tensions within it. A unitary language is the expression of centralizing and normative influences upon its many sources and forms. In contrast are those centrifugal forces that bring disunification, decentralization, and chaos. Within an utterance are the contradictions, the conflicting, heteroglossic voices and intents, and the reaccentuations of someone else's speech. In Bakhtin's view, both centripetal and centrifugal forces are continuously in tension. By countering the other, they struggle for balance. Because these tensions are at work throughout the verbal-ideological world, the concept is applicable to the power relations within the class, most prominently the distribution of discourses of the teacher and the students. An important point about Bakhtin's use of these terms is that both are needed because centripetal and centrifugal

forces condition one another dialogically, each changing the other and creating something new.

Here, I focus on how the teacher and the students in this class alternately served as the two competing forces of power in a CMC context by looking at how topic threads developed throughout the whole conversation conducted by the three groups in the second asynchronous discussion. Of special concern in this analysis is to examine the dynamics of power negotiation by focusing on who initiated a new topic thread and how they did it. Let us first look at the interactions of Group 1.

### Group 1 Dynamics

1. Hello!	Nancy	Wed Nov 13 2002 8:48 am
2. Re: Hello!	Hilda	Wed Nov 13 2002 10:27 am
3. Re: Hello!	Ali	Wed Nov 13 2002 3:28 pm
4. Re: Hello!	Anne	Wed Nov 13 2002 3:27 pm
5. Re: Hello!	Alicia	Thu Nov 14 2002 12:33 am
6. Re: Hello!	Kelly	Thu Nov 14 2002 9:44 am
7. my oral speech buggaboos	Kelly	Thu Nov 14 2002 9:54 am
8. Re: my oral speech ...	Alicia	Thu Nov 14 2002 10:30 am
9. Re: my oral speech ...	Alicia	Thu Nov 14 2002 10:31 am
10. How beautiful morning!	Daehun	Wed Nov 13 2002 12:03 pm
11. Re: How beautiful morning!	Yiping	Wed Nov 13 2002 11:38 pm
12. Re: How beautiful morning!	Alicia	Thu Nov 14 2002 12:34 am
13. Re: How beautiful morning!	Haemi	Thu Nov 14 2002 10:35 am
14. Re: How beautiful morning!	Haemi	Fri Nov 15 2002 10:23 am
15. Re: How beautiful ...	Daehun	Thu Nov 14 2002 4:07 pm
16. Writing as a social activity	Nancy	Thu Nov 14 2002 8:46 am
17. Re: Writing as a social actity	Alicia	Thu Nov 14 2002 10:41 am
18. Re: Writing as a social ...	Haemi	Fri Nov 15 2002 11:26 am
19. Re: Writing as a social ...	Alicia	Sat Nov 16 2002 12:43 am
20. Re: Writing as a social act...	Haemi	Thu Nov 14 2002 11:03 am
21. Re: Writing as a social ...	Ali	Thu Nov 14 2002 1:01 pm
22. Re: Writing as a social ...	Nancy	Thu Nov 14 2002 3:26 pm
23. Re: Writing as a social ...	Haemi	Fri Nov 15 2002 11:28 am
24. Re: Writing as a social actity	Ali	Thu Nov 14 2002 12:51 pm
25. Re: Writing as a social ...	Kelly	Thu Nov 14 2002 2:45 pm
26. Re: Writing as a social ...	Nancy	Thu Nov 14 2002 3:34 pm
27. Re: Writing as a...	Yiping	Thu Nov 14 2002 4:28 pm
28. Re: Writing as a ...	Alicia	Thu Nov 14 2002 10:38 pm
29. Re: Writing as a ...	Nancy	Fri Nov 15 2002 6:58 am
30. Re: Writing as a social ...	Hilda	Thu Nov 14 2002 2:45 pm
31. Re: Writing as a social act	Anne	Thu Nov 14 2002 3:31 pm

32. Re: Writing as a social act	Yiping	Thu Nov 14 2002 5:53 pm
33. Re: Writing as a social act	Nancy	Thu Nov 14 2002 8:28 pm
34. Perspectives	Alicia	Thu Nov 14 2002 11:06 pm
35. Writing as a social activitiy, then	Daehun	Thu Nov 14 2002 3:33 pm
36. Re: Writing as a social...	Alicia	Thu Nov 14 2002 11:16 pm
37. Re: Writing as a social ...	Daehun	Fri Nov 15 2002 11:47 am
38. In particular, Moje?	Nancy	Thu Nov 14 2002 3:40 pm
39. Re: In particular, Moje?	Kelly	Thu Nov 14 2002 10:35 pm
40. Re: In particular, Moje?	Ali	Thu Nov 14 2002 11:29 pm
41. Re: In particular, Moje?	Alicia	Thu Nov 14 2002 11:39 pm
42. Re: In particular, Moje?	Nancy	Fri Nov 15 2002 7:05 am
43. Re: In particular, Moje?	Yiping	Fri Nov 15 2002 3:51 pm
44. Author's Theater	Daehun	Thu Nov 14 2002 4:05 pm
45. Re: Author's Theater	Nancy	Thu Nov 14 2002 4:18 pm
46. Re: Author's Theater	Daehun	Thu Nov 14 2002 4:57 pm
47. Re: Author's Theater	Hillary	Thu Nov 14 2002 10:09 pm
48. Hillary are you supposed to ...	Alicia	Thu Nov 14 2002 11:44 pm
49. Re: Author's Theater	Anne	Fri Nov 15 2002 12:41 pm
50. Re: Author's Theater	Haemi	Fri Nov 15 2002 1:06 pm
51. Re: Author's Theater	Anne	Fri Nov 15 2002 1:21 pm
52. Re: Author's Theater	Haemi	Fri Nov 15 2002 12:28 pm
53. Moje's marginalized groups and ...	Ali	Thu Nov 14 2002 11:23 pm
54. Re: Moje's marginalized ...	Hilda	Fri Nov 15 2002 9:02 am
55. Re: Moje's marginalized ...	Kelly	Fri Nov 15 2002 9:43 am
56. Re: Moje's marginalized ...	Hilda	Fri Nov 15 2002 8:07 pm
57. cultural influences within ...	Alicia	Fri Nov 15 2002 12:34 am
58. Re: cultural influences ...	Ali	Fri Nov 15 2002 8:31 am
59. Re: cultural influences ...	Daehun	Fri Nov 15 2002 12:14 pm
60. Re: cultural influences ...	Alicia	Sat Nov 16 2002 12:50 am
61. Re: cultural influences ...	Haemi	Fri Nov 15 2002 12:56 pm
62. Oh, No!	Haemi	Fri Nov 15 2002 10:54 am
63. Re: Oh, No!	Nancy	Fri Nov 15 2002 11:47 am
64. Re: Oh, No!	Haemi	Fri Nov 15 2002 12:01 pm
65. Cyberidentities	Haemi	Fri Nov 15 2002 4:41 pm
66. Re: Cyberidentities	Alicia	Fri Nov 15 2002 6:27 pm
67. Research in the field of Socio ...	Haemi	Fri Nov 15 2002 5:05 pm
68. Re: Research in the field of ...	Nancy	Fri Nov 15 2002 6:56 pm
69. Re: Research in the field ...	Alicia	Sat Nov 16 2002 12:54 am
70. Re: Research in the field ...	Alicia	Sat Nov 16 2002 12:55 am

Group 1 produced a total 70 messages. As a way to explore interactional dynamics of this group, I will first present and examine message # 16 that was initiated by the teacher and that served as a first content-based prompt.

#16

Date: Thu Nov 14 2002 8:46 am

Author: Nancy

Subject: Writing as a social activity

I want to get us started by having us focus on what it means to say that writing is more than a cognitive activity, it's a social activity. Do you think our authors, Dyson, Moje, and Albright et al., would agree?

In this message, Nancy, who reported always feeling an obligation that she should have something when the students first open the Blackboard, provided a prompt that was on the content and that she believed might trigger the students' thought. Although she did not want the students to feel that they must answer her question, Nancy nevertheless felt that it was her duty as a teacher to provide something as a starting point for the discussion. In a discourse-based interview, Nancy made the following comment:

I don't like to make them [the students] think I'm not involved in the discussion because then I'll feel irresponsible in a way, I guess. I'll feel like I'm not doing my duty as a teacher. So, for each group I like to have a slightly different starting point. (Discourse-based Interview, November 23)

For this group, Nancy came up with a big question that connected all the readings for the week. Nancy described her motivation as follows:

For this group instead of concentrating on just one article, I decided to start with a topic that would allow them to bring in whichever article they wanted to bring in. So I wasn't sure if it would work. But it was definitely a point that I wanted to make. So I wrote it as a question. (Discourse-based Interview, November 23)

It is clear from her comments that she served as a centripetal force that aimed to direct the students' focus on the specific point she wanted to make about the readings. At the same time, in so doing, she exercised her power as a teacher to let the students follow her guidance in navigating and discussing the articles in the first place. One can see that the students promptly responded to her question by directly answering the question and elaborating on her point.

As the discussion unfolded, it was always possible for the students to bring in their experiences in thinking of the theoretical constructs. In the process, their real-life concerns often became the focus of the conversation, serving as a centrifugal force, the

de-centralizing influence on the overall conversation. For example, the first student who responded to Nancy's question directed the conversation to her own teaching context.

#17

Date: Thu Nov 14 2002 10:41 am

Author: Alicia

Subject: Re: Writing as a social activity

My school has had much dissension between grade levels lately. The problem is rooted in the teaching of writing. It seems that the primary grades are somewhat making a place for the children to bring their own personal lives into the classroom. But, the older grades want the writing to be done a certain way. One group is on one side of the continuum giving too much freedom and too little instruction, while the other group is so rigid they leave no space for voice and creativity.

One example was a disscussion on the use of "I" in papers. Some teachers want to eliminate "I" all together. They teach that it is wrong to use in papers. I struggled with this because I think there is a place for first person in some writing. It seems the problem is that we do not separate the two and talked enough about WHEN it is appropriate. Learning to write in the third person is a skill. Some children get to high school and have no idea how to eliminate the personal pronouns in papers. However, in inquiry research, it makes sense to address the learning process in the first person. What do you all think of this debate?

Some students in the group responded to Alicia's real-life concerns. For example, Kelly (#25) sympathized with what Alicia said about the use of "I" in school writing:

I suggest that schools communicate to kids that any type of personal-or maybe "the person" in school writing is somehow not "smart". Like Alicia's comment about taking the "I" out of writing.

Now, let us see how the teacher responded to the students' discussion at this early stage. Nancy came back immediately with the following comment (#26), serving once again as a centripetal force.

#26

Date: Thu Nov 14 2002 3:34 pm

Author: Nancy

Subject: Re: Writing as a social activity

Interesting way to look at thie questions, Kelly and Alicia. Do you think that the whole thing about writing with or without first person pronouns

might be related to the problem we have of figuring out how to choose between taking an objective versus a subjective point of view on the world. With our current "post-modern" perspective, we would say we can NEVER escape the subjective perspective, even if we eschew 'I,' "my," and "we" all we want! But, there is a point in development of thinking when we're not yet capable of thinking about a topic from multiple perspectives and when we can only make a point by bringing up "my point" "my experience" and "I think." And maybe it helps to develop the ability to see multiple perspectives to practice writing without referencing everything to the self. Still, I would never nowadays waste precious time teaching kids to leave out first person pronouns. It would be more important to teach them how to write so that you show you are engaging your reader's perspective. What do you think of that?

In a discourse-based interview, Nancy admitted that she was a little worried at this point that the students would direct the conversation to real-life situations and would never come back to the conceptual level or theoretical level of discussion:

I was trying to, in a way I was a little worried that they would be, sometimes I worry if the student takes something they read, apply it in a particular everyday situation. I mean, that's actually what I love. I love it if they take it and apply it to everyday situation. But I sometimes worry when we then get caught up in discussing the problems of that everyday situation and we forget the connection to the construct that started the conversation. I didn't want them to start complaining about "Here's how they teach writing. Isn't that stupid? There should be another way, better way to teach writing." So I was trying to make sure that this whole discussion of using "I" in your paper would come back to the level of theoretical discussion. So I was bringing that whole thing about "Can you ever escape the subjective position?" (Discourse-based Interview, November 23)

It should be noted that it was not just the teacher but the students as well who tried to use the concrete real-life example the students brought up to continue the discussion on the conceptual and theoretical level. The following message (#18) is the response of one student Haemi who tried to anchor Alicia's example in what the authors of the articles had to say about it.

#18

Date: Fri Nov 15 2002 11:26 am

Author: Haemi

Subject: Re: Writing as a social activity

Hi again, Alicia ...When I read your comment on the use of the pronouns in papers, I was thinking that Dyson and Moje's argument that learning to write is ideological work might fit in our discussion. I think learning conventions and appropriate rules for a discourse community is an intentional work. And while learning these processes, we learn the ideologies that the discourse communities have. I was thinking that through our graduate studies, we are practicing our writing to be appropriate to the scholarly discourse community that we are pursuing for our career. There, of course, is a variation of the forms so things are acceptable in one community may not fit into the other discourse community. And also, by going through this process, I believe we are not just learning the culture of the discourse that we want to be, but also we become the pieces to create the culture of the discourse community.

Now, I will present another message from the teacher that functioned as another discussion starter as the discussion unfolded. This message was written almost in the middle of the discussion session that spanned two days.

#38

Date: Thu Nov 14 2002 3:40 pm

Author: Nancy

Subject: In particular, Moje?

First of all, don't you love her name? It's pronounced with the "j" sounding like a soft "g". Like "logic" except that the "o" is the same "o" as in "more". So, it's "mogee."

Secondly, did you not love that exploration of the idea of resistance as a way to carve out an identity? So frustrating when we adults think of the consequences to those kids that this resistance may not lead to happy trouble-free lives but still, it shows such LIFE does it not? And yet, within the group of gangsta kids, there's as much cultural conformity as there would be among, say, educational researchers obeying the APA style.

Here, the teacher's motivation for posting this message was to let the students not forget each article of the week, given that the students had made a very nice point about writing as social activity as a whole.

I didn't want them to forget that I wanted the discussion of each article. And I know that Moje must have caused a lot of flurry of response, because it's such a rich article. ... I picked something that I hoped would be interesting, one of the many points she made. Resistance and how cultural conformity within the group and resistance to the outside group is something we all do in every group. So I



was just like offering something. I wasn't sure who would pick up on it.  
(Discourse-based Interview, November 23)

Again, it was not only the teacher who attempted to shift the discussion when the conversation focused too much on one topic thread. The students were willing to initiate a new topic thread. Note how Ali in message #53 made a wonderful move in shifting the discussion.

#53

Date: Thu Nov 14 2002 11:23 pm

Author: Ali

Subject: Moje's marginalized groups and their literacy practices

Even though we are entering an arena of another philosophical war that is the writing war, and although I find the topic very interesting and useful, I am really interested in shifting the discussion and hearing your voices about Moje's article dealing with the writing practices of what we usually consider as outcasts or marginalized and resistant groups. Do you guys agree with Moje's conclusions about the significance of those writings as a form of self expression? While I am writing the question, another example came to my mind, that is the Home Advocate, the newspaper that represents the spokesperson of the homeless community in Austin. Has anyone of you read that magazine? What do you think of it? Do you think that Moje's hypotheses about marginalized groups may apply in the homeless community case?

The way Ali tried to get the group to move along in the direction he wanted was very sophisticated. It was possible because Ali was genuinely interested in talking about Moje's article. In a discourse-based interview, Ali described his motivation as follows:

I was interested in hearing some other voices here that would make the same conclusion about marginalized groups in the society. This is the way they act. This is the way they live. It's not only those poor people Moje talked about. It can be applied to other people as well. This is why I gave an example of that homeless community in town. They have newsletters. I kind of wanted to compare the groups. And I wanted to get some feedback on it. (Discourse-based Interview, November 25)

In my analysis of the interactions of Group 1, I have highlighted the finding that the students and the teacher alternately served as centripetal and centrifugal forces that

conditioned one another dialogically, each changing the other and creating something new. Let us now turn to the interactions of Group 2.

## Group 2 Dynamics

1. Greetings!	Nancy	Wed Nov 13 2002 8:49 am
2. Re: Greetings!	Mary	Wed Nov 13 2002 2:13 pm
3. Re: Greetings!	Ming	Wed Nov 13 2002 4:44 pm
4. Re: Greetings!	Seunghee	Wed Nov 13 2002 5:33 pm
5. Re: Greetings!	Stacy	Thu Nov 14 2002 6:01 am
6. Re: Greetings!	Eunjoo	Thu Nov 14 2002 11:01 am
7. Dyson and Moje versus Flower ...	Nancy	Thu Nov 14 2002 8:49 am
8. Re: Dyson and Moje versus ...	Jason	Thu Nov 14 2002 10:36 am
9. Re: Dyson and Moje versus ...	Nancy	Thu Nov 14 2002 3:13 pm
10. Is it writing when it's chatting?	Nancy	Thu Nov 14 2002 3:18 pm
11. Re: Is it writing when it's ...	Jason	Thu Nov 14 2002 3:49 pm
12. Re: Is it writing when it's ...	Mary	Thu Nov 14 2002 4:01 pm
13. Re: Is it writing when it's ...	Morgan	Thu Nov 14 2002 10:19 pm
14. Re: Is it writing when ...	Nancy	Fri Nov 15 2002 6:46 am
15. Re: Is it writing when it's ...	Mary	Thu Nov 14 2002 3:58 pm
16. Re: Is it writing when it's ...	Mary	Thu Nov 14 2002 4:02 pm
17. Re: Is it writing when ...	Nancy	Thu Nov 14 2002 4:21 pm
18. Re: Is it writing ...	Ming	Thu Nov 14 2002 9:05 pm
19. Re: Is it writing ...	Mary	Thu Nov 14 2002 11:05 pm
20. Re: Is it writing when it's ...	Morgan	Thu Nov 14 2002 10:32 pm
21. Re: Is it writing when ...	Mary	Thu Nov 14 2002 11:14 pm
22. Re: Is it writing ...	Eunjoo	Thu Nov 14 2002 11:44 pm
23. Re: Is it writing ...	Nancy	Fri Nov 15 2002 6:53 am
24. Re: Is it writing...	Stacy	Fri Nov 15 2002 3:38 pm
25. Re: Is it writing...	Morgan	Fri Nov 15 2002 9:22 pm
26. Re: Is it writing when ...	Mary	Fri Nov 15 2002 6:38 pm
27. Re: Is it writing when ...	Jason	Fri Nov 15 2002 6:55 pm
28. Re: Is it writing ...	Stacy	Fri Nov 15 2002 11:14 pm
29. Re: Is it writing when ...	Morgan	Fri Nov 15 2002 9:31 pm
30. Re: Is it writing ...	Morgan	Fri Nov 15 2002 9:33 pm
31. Re: Is it writing when ...	Stacy	Fri Nov 15 2002 11:32 pm
32. Re: Is it writing when it's ...	Seunghee	Fri Nov 15 2002 4:27 pm
33. Re: Is it writing when ...	Nancy	Fri Nov 15 2002 6:59 pm
34. Re: Is it writing when ...	Morgan	Fri Nov 15 2002 9:40 pm
35. Chatting language VS. Writing	Ming	Thu Nov 14 2002 5:59 pm
36. Re: Chatting language VS. ...	Nancy	Thu Nov 14 2002 8:33 pm
37. Re: Chatting language VS. ...	Morgan	Thu Nov 14 2002 10:47 pm
38. Re: Chatting language VS. ...	Eunjoo	Fri Nov 15 2002 3:53 am
39. Re: Chatting language VS. ...	Jason	Fri Nov 15 2002 9:29 am
40. Re: Chatting language VS. ...	Nancy	Fri Nov 15 2002 9:41 am

41. Re: Chatting language ...	Stacy	Fri Nov 15 2002 3:11 pm
42. Re: Chatting language ...	Mary	Fri Nov 15 2002 6:58 pm
43. Re: Chatting language VS. ...	Seunghee	Fri Nov 15 2002 4:44 pm
44. Re: Chatting language VS. ...	Eunjoo	Fri Nov 15 2002 11:52 pm
45. Dyson's article	Ming	Fri Nov 15 2002 5:50 pm
46. Re: Dyson's article	Nancy	Fri Nov 15 2002 7:02 pm
47. Re: Dyson's article	Seunghee	Fri Nov 15 2002 10:55 pm
48. Re: Dyson's article	Eunjoo	Sat Nov 16 2002 12:07 am
49. One thing interesting!	Ming	Fri Nov 15 2002 6:02 pm
50. A question about language ...	Morgan	Fri Nov 15 2002 11:35 pm

Group 2 produced a total of 50 messages. In this group, the teacher's first content-based prompt (#7), as in the case of Group 1, was intended to bring the students' attention to the readings of the week, as a way of constructing a shared knowledge.

#7

Date: Thu Nov 14 2002 8:49 am

Author: Nancy

Subject: Dyson and Moje versus Flower & Hayes

There are so many places to start but one thought I had is that we might discuss how Dyson and Moje mesh with Flower & Hayes. The social with the cognitive: do they mesh at all, and if so, how?

Here, Nancy asked the students to connect this week's readings to last week's discussion on Flowers and Hayes' cognitive view of writing, which was one of her overarching goals for the class: to make the students see how one construct is connected to another. The teacher wanted the students to connect the new readings with the whole framework that the class was developing, so by asking them about how Flowers and Hayes' cognitive view of writing may or may not mesh with the social view, she believed the students would make a good connection. However, Nancy's question generated only one response (#8), partially because her question felt so challenging to some of the students. Ming commented about this:

Nancy posted a message first, but I didn't know how to respond to her question. I was like, "This is not something I can answer." I'm not very good at comparison of authors. For me, reading these articles, I have to be very honest with that, I wasn't quite getting the main idea of the articles. I knew what they were talking

about, but I found myself not really getting what is the main focus of the articles. Her question was even more challenging because she wanted us to compare them to the last week's readings. (Discourse-based Interview, November 22)

Another student, Mary commented:

I know I felt a little guilty because, you know, Nancy had asked one question at the beginning, but I didn't answer it. It was an extremely challenging question, I thought. And I thought that's a really big question and I almost shied away from it. (Discourse-based Interview, November 20)

Worried that her first prompt might not work with this group, Nancy initiated a new topic thread (#10), because only one student had responded to the first question and the conversation in this group had really slowed down. It was Nancy's strategy to introduce a less challenging question to the group: "I decided with this group to particularly bring up Albright's article. I thought maybe this group would like to discuss that topic" (Discourse-based Interview, November 23).

#10

Date: Thu Nov 14 2002 3:18 pm

Author: Nancy

Subject: Is it writing when it's chatting?

What did you think of that article by Albright et al.? I love that idea of the teachers being ever so tentative and cautious about their "colonization," as they call it, of the practices of their students who were are all very expert at using writing to communicate with each other. Did you read that too in that article? A sort of self-reflective lack of confidence in whether they had done the right thing? I find it persuasive somehow that they HAD done the right thing in using chat as a way to get the kids to construct meaning about their school work.

In this message, Nancy introduced a new topic by bringing up one particular article because the group had not responded to her first question. Group 2's pattern stands in clear contrast to Group 1 who responded to her first prompt very vigorously, which in turn encouraged the teacher to introduce a new topic to decentralize the unifying conversation. As the teacher expected in Group 2, the question (#10) generated many responses from the students (a total of 24 messages). And again, as in the case of Group 1, this group would have continued with this new topic if Ming, not the teacher, had not

introduced a new topic. Here, I want to highlight how one student took over the teacher's role in initiating new topics (#35, #45) and even making a meta-discourse comment (#49).

#35

Date: Thu Nov 14 2002 5:59 pm

Author: Ming

Subject: Chatting language VS. Writing language

"Author: Nancy

So let's talk about that, about online chatting as a form of writing. I do like so much how such writing is a sort of hybrid form and, by its very hybridity, can help us understand better what we mean y writing, what we mean by oral language use. So the kids in that article were learning to write in order to learn (what people in the writing field call "epistemic writing") and they were using their obviously well developed skills as communicators online to learn from each other. I do so much see that sort of chatting as a wonderful place to watch how social factors interweave with cognitive factors as one puts words to thoughts and types them into a network. A final thought: Don't you love the creative use of language these kids engage?"

Dear Nancy, I hope you don't mind that I "steal" your words from group three discussion. I have something to say about this, but instead of replying this there, I think maybe I need to contribute to my group first.

Being an everyday Internet user, I have been used to the on-line chat language. Now, when I see "lol", I know that means "laugh out loud"; when I see "btw", I know it means "by the way". I sometimes use those language when I am on-line, too. However, I know very clearly that those language belongs in the Internet chat. I will not adopt the language into my writing work. Well, that's me, but not for my former students in the senior high school. When I gave them a composition assignment, some of them use u instead of you, ppl instead of people, or something like that in it. I also saw they add the facial expression like :-), :-(, or :-b in the end of the paragraph once in a while. At first, I thought it very cute, but then, my second thought is that I began to wonder how much this kind of chat language will affect the language learning. As we know, nowadays, most students start to use computer when they are very young, and many of them have on-line chat experience. When they are using them, I guess they also process their thoughts in the kind of language through their cognition process. Don't you think this will decrease a student's vocabulary learning? Has anyone seen any similar writing from your students here?

I have already explained how Ming came to initiate this topic about chat language versus writing language (#35) in the second category on “Intertextual Abductive Musings.” Here, I only want to list some of the responses from the group when Ming engaged in the “non-traditional” way of initiating a topic.

That was great. It’s funny that she would do that. These students are so clever. It makes me feel good that they know they are allowed to do that. (Nancy, Discourse-based Interview, November 23)

How cool it was for Ming to import that message that Nancy wrote as part of another group's discussion! I'm glad we've explored this area. (Mary, Discourse-based Interview, November, 20)

In Message #45, Ming once again initiated a new topic. Let us first see what she wrote here.

#45

Date: Fri Nov 15 2002 5:50 pm

Author: Ming

Subject: Dyson's article

OK. Here I am, again. This week is really a tough week for me. Now, I am sneaking other group's idea again. There are people in other group saying that they were struggling or lost in the article before Sammy showed up. I felt so released when I knew this! I thought I was the only one who felt that and I thought it was due to my insufficient language ability. Thank them for sharing those feelings. :)

Enough for personal feelings. I would like to talk about writing as a social activity. I remember when I was young, we were taught that there was a certain type of writing we should follow when we try to compose an article at school. For example, we are supposed to write the article optimistically. If the given topic is "ocean," in the end of the article we should say that "we need to learn from the ocean" or "time and tide wait for no men" or something like that. Well, maybe I should not say this is the type we are "supposed to" write. Maybe I should say this is the type that can get higher grades, and as a student, pursuing higher grades was everything (what a pity.). What's interesting is that I learned the "concept" when I was in the elementary school, but when I was in high school, I still wrote in the same way. I naturally assumed that others would expect me to write like that. However, high school teachers, especially senior high school teachers, were expected me to be creative and not to write those "cliche." :-( So, I need to change my writing style again. Hadn't tried to be creative since I was little,

writing something creative is really very hard for me then, but I had to try. Writing is really a social activity, isn't it?

Ming came back with this message on Friday when the group seemed to ignore the last article by Dyson. She expressed how hard it was for her to understand this particular article by Dyson when she first read it.

I found Dyson's article especially hard to read. After I read one or two pages, I was like, "Oh, I have to stop because I don't know about the constructs." So I went back to the Blackboard. I felt that reading other people's opinions can help me to read and understand the article. So I tried to read other groups' messages since in our group we didn't have many messages. (Discourse-based Interview, November 22)

It was when Ming went to look at the other groups and read other students' responses about the article that she found some motivation to continue to read the article. Some messages that influenced her very much were the ones by Rita and Vivien in Group 3 who shared their feelings about how hard it was to read that particular article until "Sammy" came in. Here are the two messages posted in Group 3, with which Ming was very impressed.

Rita's message:

I must admit I felt a bit lost while reading the article. But the minute Sammy was brought into the picture, I became much more engaged. His individual responses and reactions to literacy and group dynamics were quite remarkable.

Vivien's message:

Like Rita, I was struggling with the article until Sammy arrived on the scene. I like Sammy. The way he was able to create a place for himself on the playground through his ability to create superhero stories, I found amazingly complex for a 7 year old. I was also very impressed with the way he was able to negotiate with the girls in the class while still developing his place. He is very enlightened.

Those two messages encouraged Ming to revisit the article. In a discourse-based interview, Ming described the process as follows:

After I read messages about the article, I was like, “Is Sammy there?.” I went back to the article and said, “Okay, hang in there. There should be Sammy there later on.” And when I came to Sammy, you know, I told you before how much I love stories, I was like, “That’s great.” I did want to share that feeling, so I posted that. (Discourse-based Interview, November 22)

Initially feeling guilty for not being able to finish the article and also feeling frustrated with that, Ming was able to regain her confidence by reading other people’s responses. The feeling that “Wow, I am not the only one” who had struggled with the article gave her momentum to “hang in there” until she found Sammy’s story in the article. For Ming, stories, or particular illustrative examples, were always something that gave her much clearer images of the theories or constructs. After sharing her feelings about the article, she focused on the construct, “writing as a social activity.” Ming was aware that students in Group 3 were talking about Nancy’s question about whether writing is a social activity. Ming wondered if she could copy that discussion again for her group. However, Ming found it hard to single out one message to copy, so she decided to start the conversation on her own:

They were talking about Nancy’s question, “Is writing a social activity?” I was like, “Should I copy that again?” No. Actually it was hard to single out one message to copy, so I was like, “Okay, I can just talk about it. Why not?” I just wrote it down. (Discourse-based Interview, November 22)

By initiating another new topic thread for her own group, Ming felt that she acted as a leader or moderator even though she had not planned to.

I was always a respondent before. But because our group was quiet, I felt I had to speak out. Maybe I just thought we should light up our group. I was not really intending to be a leader, but why is my group so quiet? I just found it to be my duty to do something. I have to give something to my group. It was fun, actually. I think I like to post something and share experiences with others. It gives you emotional support and often times it gives you a different angle to look at things. (Discourse-based Interview, November 22)

Ming’s Initiation of the topic reflected her growing sense of empowerment. Her initiating message (#45) was fresh and open, and her use of the word “personal feelings”



seemed significant in the sense that she was, in this medium, taking a real risk in both posing the question at all and in posing the question as subjectively as she did. Clearly, Ming felt safe enough to pose this topic and then follow it with a narrative of her own personal experience.

Ming's leadership was also manifested in her last message (#49) titled "one thing interesting." In this message, she made a meta-discourse comment, which was a rather evaluative comment of all the comments the students had made about the topic she had previously initiated. This message shows how carefully she had read other students' opinions.

#49

Date: Fri Nov 15 2002 6:02 pm

Author: Ming

Subject: One thing interesting!

While I was reading all the responses to the topic about chatting language vs. writing language, I found one thing very interesting. Do you see the cultural differences in the opinions? No offense. I am just very interested in how different culture background may influence people's thoughts. Maybe just an coincidence. I found that people from estern culture background (Taiwan and Korean) had more similar feelings, and people from western culture background had more common opinions. Do you see that, too?

Ming saw the teacher's role in the written discussion as a kind of a moderator, "keeping the discussion going, and pointing out something important." Interestingly, that was exactly what Ming was doing in this group, keeping the discussion going and pointing out something important.

Now, let us turn to Group 3. This group showed the most complex web of power relations. In Group 3, power dynamics were increasingly complicated as the participants' intentions and the way they wanted to declare their presence in this CMC setting were competing for the attention.

## Group 3 Dynamics

1. Bonjour!	Nancy	Wed Nov 13 2002 8:52 am
2. Re: Bonjour!	Rubin	Wed Nov 13 2002 12:17 pm
3. Re: Bonjour!	Vivien	Wed Nov 13 2002 1:31 pm
4. Re: Bonjour!	Yujin	Wed Nov 13 2002 3:25 pm
5. Re: Bonjour!	Hillary	Wed Nov 13 2002 9:13 pm
6. Re: Bonjour!	Rita	Wed Nov 13 2002 9:36 pm
7. Re: Bonjour!	Minho	Wed Nov 13 2002 10:16 pm
8. Re: Bonjour!	Yang	Wed Nov 13 2002 11:04 pm
9. Re: Bonjour!	Pei	Thu Nov 14 2002 9:10 am
10. Faigley predicts Moje	Nancy	Thu Nov 14 2002 8:57 am
11. my evolving response to the ...	Rita	Thu Nov 14 2002 9:09 am
12. Re: my evolving response ...	Nancy	Thu Nov 14 2002 9:54 am
13. Re: my evolving response ...	Yujin	Thu Nov 14 2002 1:32 pm
14. Another form of expressing...	Minho	Thu Nov 14 2002 4:07 pm
15. Re: my evolving response ...	Nancy	Thu Nov 14 2002 11:28 am
16. Re: my evolving response ...	Hillary	Thu Nov 14 2002 2:24 pm
17. Re: my evolving response ...	Nancy	Thu Nov 14 2002 3:05 pm
18. Re: my evolving ...	Minho	Thu Nov 14 2002 4:34 pm
19. Re: my evolving ...	Nancy	Thu Nov 14 2002 8:35 pm
20. Re: my evolving response ...	Vivien	Thu Nov 14 2002 2:21 pm
21. Re: my evolving response ...	Hillary	Thu Nov 14 2002 2:27 pm
22. Re: my evolving response ...	Rita	Thu Nov 14 2002 2:43 pm
23. Re: my evolving response ...	Nancy	Thu Nov 14 2002 3:10 pm
24. Re: my evolving response ...	Pei	Thu Nov 14 2002 6:00 pm
25. Re: my evolving ...	Vivien	Thu Nov 14 2002 6:03 pm
26. Re: my evolving ...	Yang	Fri Nov 15 2002 12:54 am
27. Re: my evolving response ...	Vivien	Thu Nov 14 2002 6:14 pm
28. Re: Faigley predicts Moje	Vivien	Thu Nov 14 2002 2:08 pm
29. Re: Faigley predicts Moje	Rubin	Thu Nov 14 2002 3:20 pm
30. Re: Faigley predicts Moje	Minho	Thu Nov 14 2002 4:48 pm
31. Re: Faigley predicts Moje	Vivien	Thu Nov 14 2002 6:10 pm
32. Re: Faigley predicts Moje	Hillary	Thu Nov 14 2002 7:13 pm
33. Re: Faigley predicts Moje	Pei	Fri Nov 15 2002 2:25 pm
34. Re: Faigley predicts Moje	Rita	Fri Nov 15 2002 9:16 am
35. Re: Faigley predicts Moje	Vivien	Fri Nov 15 2002 9:22 am
36. Re: Faigley predicts Moje	Rita	Fri Nov 15 2002 9:57 am
37. Re: Faigle ...	Vivien	Fri Nov 15 2002 10:41 am
38. Re: Faigle ...	Hillary	Fri Nov 15 2002 11:36 am
39. Re: Faigley predicts Moje	Yang	Fri Nov 14 2002 11:47 pm
40. Re: Faigley predicts Moje	Nancy	Fri Nov 15 2002 6:44 am
41. Re: Faigley predicts Moje	Rubin	Fri Nov 15 2002 3:07 pm
42. Re: Faigley predicts Moje	Rita	Fri Nov 15 2002 4:02 pm
43. Re: Faigley predicts Moje	Pei	Fri Nov 15 2002 6:02 pm
44. Re: Faigley ...	Nancy	Fri Nov 15 2002 7:05 pm
45. Re: Faigley ...	Rubin	Fri Nov 15 2002 7:50 pm

46. Re: Faigley ...	Yujin	Fri Nov 15 2002 8:04 pm
47. Re: Faigley predicts Moje	Vivien	Fri Nov 15 2002 7:05 pm
48. Re: Faigley ...	Nancy	Fri Nov 15 2002 7:06 pm
49. Re: Faigley ...	Rita	Fri Nov 15 2002 7:53 pm
50. Re: Faigley ...	Yang	Fri Nov 15 2002 8:24 pm
51. Re: Faigley ...	Pei	Fri Nov 15 2002 8:19 pm
52. Re: Faigley ...	Vivien	Fri Nov 15 2002 9:00 pm
53. Re: Faigley ...	Rubin	Fri Nov 15 2002 11:34 pm
54. Re: Faigley predicts Moje	Vivien	Fri Nov 15 2002 8:56 am
55. Dyson's Writing Children	Hillary	Thu Nov 14 2002 3:13 pm
56. Re: Dyson's Writing Children	Rita	Fri Nov 15 2002 9:53 am
57. Re: Dyson's Writing Children	Vivien	Fri Nov 15 2002 11:02 am
58. Re: Dyson's Writing Children	Pei	Fri Nov 15 2002 8:34 pm
59. Re: Dyson's Writing Children	Nancy	Fri Nov 15 2002 9:24 pm
60. Re: Dyson's Writing Children	Yang	Fri Nov 15 2002 8:59 pm
61. Re: Dyson's Writing Children	Yujin	Fri Nov 15 2002 9:15 pm
62. Some of commonly used emoticons	Minho	Thu Nov 14 2002 4:35 pm
63. Re: Some of commonly used ...	Nancy	Thu Nov 14 2002 8:42 pm
64. Re: Some of commonly used ...	Kelly	Fri Nov 15 2002 10:50 am
65. Re: Some of commonly use...	Vivien	Fri Nov 15 2002 11:04 am
66. Re: Some of commonly used ...	Pei	Fri Nov 15 2002 8:37 pm
67. Re: Some of commonly used ...	Yujin	Fri Nov 15 2002 9:32 pm

Group 3 produced a total of 67 messages. As in the case of Group 1 and Group 2, the teacher opened up the discussion with the following prompt:

#10

Date: Thu Nov 14 2002 8:57 am

Author: Nancy

Subject: Faigley predicts Moje

We could talk about any topic you would like, of course, but just to get us started, I'd like to know if you think that Faigley, writing in 1986 about a "social view" of writing, would have predicted what Moje is reporting in 2000. Is her article squarely in a social view? What do you think?

For each group Nancy liked to have a slightly different starting point. Nancy described her motivation as follows:

It's more for creativity, I guess, more for not boredom. I don't want them to, I don't want to be bored by having them start on the same point. Maybe I'm also aware that in the end they'll read perhaps the whole written discussion and if we had started on exactly the same point, it might be boring. For this group, when I

wrote this question about Faigley, I wanted to make sure that they connected the new readings with the whole framework that we were developing. So, by asking them about Faigley, how Faigley predicts Moje, I thought that that would be a good connection. (Discourse-based Interview, November 21)

What's interesting is that the first student Rita who came right after Nancy almost right away "hijacked" the teacher's topic. Instead of starting a new thread, Rita changed the subject title to "my evolving response to the chat room article," yet her comment was still anchored to the teacher's prompt with an entirely different topic. Let us see what Rita wrote:

#11

Date: Thu Nov 14 2002 9:09 am

Author: Rita

Subject: my evolving response to the chat room article

Buon giorno tutti!

First of all, I must begin with my confession that I'm torn between which article to write about first. I loved the gangsta article. And although I didn't love the chat room article, my evolving response to it is vying for my attention.

I was sold on the use of chat rooms in language arts programs. It seemed like a good idea to me notwithstanding some of the disadvantages that the authors reported. And suddenly when they moved on to chat rooms in Science, I was incredulous, doubtful that it could ever work. Why did I immediately shift allegiances? Why do I hold science (and math) in such a mysterious, fearful regard that I thought it was inappropriate to have informal chat room discussions about such lofty, sacred, impenetrable subjects? Certainly you have to have a teacher to transmit the mystery. Certainly students couldn't construct meaning on their own. Then suddenly, a few paragraphs into the discussion, I was liberated by the idea of science in a chat room - - - informal language like 'tis is the moon" interrupted by brb (bathroom breaks) - - - it all sounded so novel and appealing to me! Of course, the authors did express concerns that the use of chat rooms didn't encourage the students to change their positions towards scientific authority. But, at least it's a start. One that's very over-due!

Many of you may not have the math/science phobias that haunt me. In which case, the above thoughts will have no meaning!

As for Dr. Green's question about the Moje article, I will think about it throughout the day and respond when I'm once again before a computer.

Good day!

Rita

In this message, Rita mainly talked about the chat room article that had in fact nothing to do with the teacher's prompt. In the beginning, she alluded that she wanted to talk about the chat room article first because it was vying for her attention. Also note the way she made an effort to let the teacher know that she would go back to her question later on. A discourse-based interview revealed Rita's negotiation processes between two conflicting needs, her wanting to say what she wanted to share with her group members first within the time constraint she was facing at the time, and her wanting not to ignore totally the teacher's question.

I probably should have started a new thread, but what happened was that I had to go to the class at 10 in the morning, so I had to leave. I wanted to make sure that I posted something, so I had actually written something about the chat room article in WORD. And I had Nancy's question. I wanted to post my own thought first, but also I wanted Nancy to know that I would think about what Nancy said. Yes, you are right. I should have started a new thread, because it was really not a response to Nancy. But I wanted to make sure that within the time limit I had posted my first message. This was the one I wanted to discuss, share with other people. Yeah, that was pretty ambiguous for me to... I should have started a new thread. (Discourse-based Interview, November 26)

Rita further noted that when she had something that would cause other people to learn, it was easier initially to say what she had been thinking first and then go back and respond to other comments. For Rita, given that the teacher's question was posted first, the best way to compromise between the two competing needs – to say what she wanted to say first and at the same time not to ignore the teacher's question – was to anchor her response to the teacher's question but to say what she wanted to say, making it somewhat connected.

It is interesting to see the next move made by the teacher when she saw her own topic "hijacked" by the very first student, Rita. The following is the message Nancy wrote in response to Rita:

#12

Date: Thu Nov 14 2002 9:54 am

Author: Nancy

Subject: Re: my evolving response to the chat room article

I love that sentence on p. 696 -- "Essentially, then, we were colonizing an aspect of youth culture to accomplish goals that were not the students' own." Reminds me of Kress (i'm 99% sure it was) who talked about discourse and genre as colonizing and engulfing all language that comes along.

Here, the teacher immediately responded to Rita's response to the chat room article. However instead of directly commenting on what the student had to say about the article, the teacher tried to shift the focus from Rita's "evolving response to the chat room article" to what the teacher saw as important in the article. The teacher described her motivation as follows:

Although I liked the comment very much, I remember thinking for a long time I wondered whether anyone would ever go back to talk about what I had mentioned at first. I did wonder what's gonna happen. ... So, when she brought that up, then I decided to myself I am going to, "What do I want to say about that article?" I wanted the students to see, and I guess it's one of my goals that they see all the articles as somewhat connected. It seems that's my job. I want them to see those connections and I love it when they make that connection. But if they don't, then I feel like that's my job. So when she brings up that article, then I get to bring up this one sentence which I really liked in that article, and then it allows me to connect to the thread. (Discourse-based Interview, November 21)

Nancy's comment revealed that she felt a little worried that other students might not go back to her original topic when Rita immediately shifted the direction of the conversation. However, now that a student had understood the chat room article, the teacher wanted to do her job, which is to let the students see all the articles as connected by bringing up a sentence in the article and connecting it to other authors' constructs about discourse and genre. In a way, the teacher hijacked the student's original topic at this point to fulfill her instructional goal, even though the teacher came back immediately (#15) to comment directly on what Rita had to say in the previous message. In fact, the teacher, after

posting what she wanted the students to discuss, addressed Rita's original inquiry about the chat room article.

#15

Date: Thu Nov 14 2002 11:28 am

Author: Nancy

Subject: Re: my evolving response to the chat room article

An interesting point, Rita. We often think of the response to literature as allowing for more latitude, as more obviously a place for construction of meaning. But, it's just the same with math and science. If the science is really going to stick, it HAS to be that there is a way for the students really to negotiate and have dialogue with the ideas being presented in science. Now, I'll grant you that the discourse over the science content did not seem all that advanced -- I wasn't quite sure what the students were supposed to do when they discussed the moon -- still, why shouldn't they bring up their own questions, set themselves up for observation/data gathering, and then discuss the results. It's like book talk: ask a question, go back to the text to gether evidence for your point of view, and present your conclusion for discussion by your group. No?

The two-party tug-of-war developed into a three-party game when another student Yujin joined it with the following message:

#13

Date: Thu Nov 14 2002 1:32 pm

Author: Yujin

Subject: Re: my evolving response to the chat room article

The literacy practices of gangsta adolescents helped me better understand adolescents with maladaptive behavioral problems at school. Students in adolescence period are especially sensitive to their identities and they are more likely to find out some places or context which make them establish their identity dominantly. This article tells me that we are likely to have communication problems with people who have different identity from ours, if we don't take their own social voice or social literacy practicetake into account.

Yujin's subject line "Re: my evolving response to the chat room article" contradicts the actual content of her message. Instead of commenting on Rita's response to chat room article, Yujin talked about Moje' gangsta adolescents. In this message,

Yujin wrote her general impression about the Moje article and what the article taught her as a future teacher who would have to deal with adolescents like the ones Moje described. Although Yujin started by talking about Moje's article, she was not addressing the teacher's question either, which was to ask the students if they thought that Faigley, writing in 1986 about a "social view" of writing, would have predicted what Moje is reporting in 2000. In a discourse-based interview, Yujin explained how she settled on this message after having some struggle as to which direction she wanted to go with her message.

I really wanted to answer Nancy's question. She asked us to connect this week's reading with last week's. But what happened was that I accessed the Blackboard at school, and left my previous readings all behind at home. I was like, "Oh my god, I can't remember exactly what Faigley had to say about this view of writing as a social act. I wish I brought that article here with me." So I read Rita's response to the chat room article. Honestly, that article didn't interest me so much. I didn't have much to say about that. So I wrote about how I made sense of Moje's article, which gave me a lot of insights as to how I should respect various literacy practices of our students. It was just my thought about that article which has nothing to do with Nancy's question nor Rita's comment. You know, I had to leave town early that afternoon. So I had to write something before I leave. If I had had more time, I would have started a new thread about Moje's article with more details. My thought at the time was not deep enough, logical enough to serve as a new topic prompt, so I just put it there. (Discourse-based Interview, November 26)

Although Yujin was nervous about initiating a new topic thread about the things she was interested in and thus attached her message as if it were a response to Rita, she nevertheless put her ideas out there and joined this tug-of-war. The game went on when another student Minho came in with a new subject line, "Another form of expressing one's thought."

#14

Date: Thu Nov 14 2002 4:07 pm

Author: Minho

Subject: Another form of expressing one's thought

I remember that some of the teenagers who are marginalized in a society showed up in the Ophra Winfrey's talk show. They are normally considered



trouble-makers at school and out of school too. The Chicago city has spent so much money cleaning the wall full of graffiti by those gang-connected teens. One guy came up with an idea that their graffiti should not be viewed as a nuisance to society and instead he claimed that it is another medium of communicating and conveying some message to people or at least to their peers.

So the city decided to set up or designate some parts of the walls in the city as a place where these teens can express their thoughts, ideas, values, etc.

I think high of the city's decision as it is indicative of its acknowledgement of the power of unsanctioned literacy tools.

As Moje suggested, it behooves us that we as future teachers, researchers, or leaders in a society need to be more and more open-minded enough to appreciate or reconceptualize a variety form of literacy as tools for our students to express themselves.

Minho's message was related to Yujin's message about Moje's article, but Minho refused to put his message as a response to the previous messages. For him, a new subject line would help grab others' attention and make other students respond to his own thoughts about the article. He explained his motivation as follows:

This message might be a response to Yujin's message, but it was my own thought I had while I was reading the article, how it reminded me of marginalized kids in the Oprah show. I thought it would serve as a new conversation starter, so I just put a new subject line there. That way, I thought other people would recognize this message easily. You know, there's already several messages before me. People would not read this carefully if it's just a response to the topic already discussed. (Discourse-based Interview, November 25)

It does appear that these four players were engaged in a power game – how to make their presence more visible, vying for attention. Now, one might wonder if the teacher's original question would ever be readdressed by the students in the group. In fact, the teacher's original question about how Faigley's ideas were connected to Moje's was taken up by one student who felt that “at least some people had to make an attempt to answer the question.” Vivien who made the first attempt to answer the teacher's question reported that she figured the teacher chose the articles, so she knew what she wanted the students to discuss: “Maybe she is asking a question for a reason. I was compelled to address the question” (Discourse-based Interview, November 26).

Vivien's text (#28) shows how seriously she considered the teacher's question by making the connection between this week's readings to many of the constructs the class had so far developed and bringing up a real-life story about a teenage boy she knew who was a whiz at computer-related things, but struggled with the "simplest" concepts in high school. She ended her message by asking the group about what they thought would be a solution. Vivien's message here triggered many responses (25 messages) from the group members.

#28

Date: Thu Nov 14 2002 2:08 pm

Author: Vivien

Subject: Re: Faigley predicts Moje

In thinking how Faigley discusses the social view of writing, I think it is reasonable to predict the Moje article. The mere nature of being a member of a group is in line with how Faigley describes the social view--writing can only be understood from the perspective of the group (society), rather than the individual. What is important about Moje's article to me is the group membership these young people so desired. It is also interesting that they chose this medium in which to express themselves or "to write themselves into the world." (page 652)

What I found completely fascinating was how these young people chose to create and take part in elaborate and high-developed literacy practices yet were seen as unsuccessful by school standards. The combination of their high levels of metalinguistic awareness and their poor performance in school is also tied into the social view of writing. It's like traditional school settings seem to take the individual out of their situation and expect them to be empty vessels.

The Moje article also makes me think of the articles about the differences between home language and school language. Bruner and Hammer seemed to place more value on home language in the language acquisition process. But as children get older, it's school language (or what happens at school) that gets valued. Like these gangsta adolescents, their "home" language was not valued. But Moje, I believe, wants to highlight the complexity of their literacy practices.

A further comparison I feel inclined to make is to our articles on reading and the pull of the text (Schallert and Ivey). It's not that young people are not interested in reading or learning. It's just that they are not interested in reading or learning what we as teachers tell them to read. I'm thinking about a teenage boy I know who is a whiz at computer related things,

but struggles with the "simplest" concepts in high school. But, what is the solution?

## **Commentary**

In this analysis focusing on the intertextual balance between centripetal and centrifugal forces, I have shown how the teacher and the students, and the students among themselves, negotiated power in the network of social relations. The Bakhtinian issue of power and of the construction of the subjectivities of both the students and the teacher were embedded in this written conversation. Construction of subjectivity, particularly the centering rather than the de-centering of the subjectivity of the teacher, was at the center of the beginning of the conversation and so was the tendency to engage in unifying "centripetal" statements about the construction of the students as "apprentices to be guided" and about the issues the teacher wanted the students to discuss at the conceptual and theoretical level. Perhaps the initial exercise of the teacher's centripetal force must necessarily precede deconstruction of subjects and objects and the de-centering of the teacher in the classroom metrics of power, because the students generally viewed the teacher's initial centripetal role as a positive force.

I appreciate her role. It's like when she posts a message, she is a positive force. She makes this discussion very lively. I think she is playing a very important role, just lighting up the general atmosphere. (Yang, Discourse-based Interview, November 19)

I think that the instructor has to participate in the discussion like Nancy does, not just letting the students engage in the discussion. I don't know, but I just think sometimes she can clarify, maybe I still think she is an authority, so I just think she can help us to see what we can't see, point out the controversy or clarify our questions and misconceptions. (Yiping, Discourse-based Interview, November 20)

Actually I look forward to her being here. I would be interested in not getting the approval of the right answer from her but, you know, we are intelligent people, but we still need information about the authors that we have never read before, I appreciate her interjecting every now and then to clear things up or using her comment to better explore the article. Yeah, it didn't bother me at all. I like that she is there. (Vivien, Discourse-based Interview, November 26)

Her role is like a moderator, keeping the discussion going, and pointing out something important. Actually I love her being here with us. (Ming, Discourse-based Interview, November 22)

She did a great job of basically providing us discussion prompts and then letting us play. (Morgan, Discourse-based Interview, November 19)

I don't think she was intrusive at all. (Alicia, Discourse-based Interview, November 21)

As can be seen from the students' comments on the teacher's initial role of providing prompts that were intended to pull the students together, the teacher's authority was viewed as a positive force. However, as the conversation evolved, significant in the written conversation was an absence of a privileging of the authority of an expert as manifested in the almost total absence of direct questions to the teacher about specific problems, except to the extent that the teacher was a co-participant in the written discussion and like the other participants, could respond or not respond to any of the messages posted in the written conversation. The students themselves perceived the teacher as another voice as the conversation evolved, sometimes privileging other students' voices over the teacher's.

I mostly learn from my classmates, especially in this kind of discussion. All my classmates are teachers, so it's not that they are standing at the center of the classroom and talking to me. But when we are in the written discussion, it's like, we are each other's teacher. And Nancy's role becomes really minimized. (Yang, Discourse-based Interview, November 19)

In an asynchronous stuff, she becomes just like one of us. In classroom situation she is in charge, she is the one who is initiating the kinds of conversation. Even though she starts a conversation here, the guidance is not as, it's way broader. It's more like "what do you think about this?" And then you can go anywhere you want. (Hillary, Discourse-based Interview, November 20)

You know, it seems so natural the way she participates. It doesn't stand out to me. It's really comfortable to me because I felt like her opinions and questions were not imposing. I didn't feel that much gap I found in oral discussion. She seemed to be another participant. (Rita, Discourse-based Interview, November 26)

I just feel like she is kind of like another voice. So I'm not nervous that she is in there reading everything and participating. She is another contributor or something like that. (Stacy, Discourse-based Interview, November 25)

Nancy did not make nearly as many comments as did the students and the comments she did make were indeed quite short. As was usually the case in class, the topic changed only when Nancy asked for it to change. However, in the written discussions, although I responded to the prompts by Nancy, I freely started threads of my own. (Vivien, Discourse-based Interview, November 26)

Only a few students showed some ambivalent feelings about Nancy's rather "de-centralized" role in the CMC context as opposed to her rather "powerful" presence in the oral class.

When she said something here, it's usually short. It's usually a question. I do like her questions, but she didn't really participate enough. She was more or less an outsider, checking in every now and then. I wanted her to participate more, but it's a dilemma because she is a teacher. If she participates, I can see that the other students are maybe not wanting to be themselves. (Pei, Discourse-based Interview, November 20)

I felt like that because what we started doing in writing was really, we were relating it totally to us and our other experiences, and we did not continue to go back to the text we addressed. For the most part, people kept doing that. I feel like if an instructor could step in and they could say, "Well, wait a second. You're making a great connection there. Let's go back to the text," although maybe she doesn't want that. I mean, there is value in students working on ideas through their experiences. I don't know, but I think it can also be taking a responsibility off the students to kind of complete the assignments. The same thing is with young children. You have a great discussion about their experiences, but maybe you want them to link it more to the book. But I think there's value in delving into one issue like this, so I don't know. (Mary, Discourse-based Interview, November 20)

As the students viewed the teacher as another voice in the CMC context, what much of the conversation suggests was that both the students and the teacher possessed power to some degree and the intertextual dynamic in the written conversation was a negotiation of competing claims for power.

## A Counter-example to Intertextuality

As Bakhtin noted, texts vary a great deal in their degree of heterogeneity, depending upon whether their intertextual relations are complex or simple. Texts also differ in the extent to which their heterogeneous elements are integrated, and so, in the extent to which their heterogeneity is evident on the surface of the text. Texts may or may not be appropriated and reaccentuated; they may or may not be drawn into the prevailing tone and image of the surrounding text. Or again, the texts of others may or may not be merged into background assumptions of the text by being presupposed. So a text may have an uneven and “bumpy” textual surface, or a relatively smooth one.

The process of re-accentuation or appropriation may be greatly constrained when a given text is distant from us and when we begin to perceive it against a background completely foreign to it. Perceived in such a way, it may be subjected to a re-accentuation that radically distorts it. Bakhtin (1981) explained this as follows:

Every discourse presupposes a special conception of the listener, of his apperceptive background and the degree of his responsiveness; it presupposes a specific distance. All this is very important for coming to grips with the historical life of discourse. Ignoring such aspects and nuances leads to a reification of the word (and to a muffling of the dialogism native to it). (p. 346)

The following example will show how some threads had to stop too early, focusing on what factors affected the muffling of the dialogism native to any text. I will present a particular case of an utterance that did not fully realize the potential for the intertextual chain of communication.

#1

Date: Thu Nov 14 2002 8:49 am

Author: Nancy

Subject: Dyson and Moje versus Flower & Hayes

There are so many places to start but one thought I had is that we might discuss how Dyson and Moje mesh with Flower & Hayes. The social with the cognitive: do they mesh at all, and if so, how?

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#2

Date: Thu Nov 14 2002 10:36 am

Author: Jason

Subject: Re: Dyson and Moje versus Flower & Hayes

I suspect the first place that there is a real disparity concerning "text" between the two articles is found in the "-etic" "-emic" continuum... Unless I'm recalling incorrectly, Flower&Hayes talk about writing from a perspective in such a way so as to allow the audience (who first approaches the text from an outsider's or 'etic' perspective) to perceive and comprehend that text. It is in the "reconstruction" of the text that the audience gains an internal ('emic') perspective.

Moje's article involves writers who only write for an 'emic' perspective. The ganstas tags, graffiti, poetry, etc. is written for people on the 'inside,' being purposely created to prevent external comprehension. The text is not approachable to an external perspective.

So what is the conclusion? I believe that the texts spoken of in both articles are socially gauged. In both cases, the author is primarily aware of the audience as text is written.

Let me know what y'all think...

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#3

Date: Thu Nov 14 2002 3:13 pm

Author: Nancy

Subject: Re: Dyson and Moje versus Flower & Hayes

Oooh. This is fun, Jason! Let me offer that in fact it is still an etic perspective when the gangsta kids are writing in that WITHIN the group, there is still this wish to communicate to someone who can never know directly the "emic" perspective.

This is the only case that the teacher's first discussion prompt generated only one response from the students. Discourse-based interviews with the students and the teacher in this group (Group 2) pointed to the fact that it is not just the teacher's question itself but the first student who responded to the teacher's prompt that discouraged other students' attempt to make an intertextual link to the thread. Therefore, I will focus on what were the characteristics of message #2 that made the other students shy away from it. The following discourse-based interview revealed Jason's assumptions behind the text.

Yoonhee: Can you tell me what was your motivation for writing this particular message?

Jason: Sure. This was an interesting day for me. I had to post one early that morning because I knew I would go out that afternoon. I didn't know what to say, but I was like, "Let's see what's there." And honestly at this point, I had read the first two articles [by Dyson and Moje], but the last one [by Albright], I still had to read.

Jason: I thought about Moje's article, "What can I say about this?" This is really an interesting study. You don't see a lot of study about gangs. One thing that these people seemed to be doing was that they write things that are not comprehensible to outsiders. I really thought of this to be emic/etic perspective, looking at things from the insider's point of view or outsider's point of view. That's the first thing I see. One of these articles talked about the writer trying to portray the text in such a way that the reader can understand as if he or she were a part of the story. So the writer specifically pulling them into the story to get an emic perspective, but the gangsters, they are writing especially only for each other in such a way that outsiders can't see or understand the insider's perspective. So there's a great dichotomy between the two. One is writing so that an audience can understand, the other is writing so that the audience can't understand. That's what I was talking about.

Yoonhee: And then actually Nancy's question was actually about how the cognitive view meshed with the social view.

Jason: Well, honestly, I didn't even look at this cognitive view. My response was just what's interesting to me about these two articles I read for this week. So I kind of ignored the question about how the social and the cognitive mesh. I posted something that wasn't really applicable to her question. (Discourse-based Interview, November 21)

The interview with Jason revealed that he was not truly addressing the teacher's question, but rather he was talking about what was interesting to him about the first two articles he had read for the week. That happened many times when the students had such a strong feeling about the topic, as in the case of Rita I illustrated in the previous section. However in this case, Jason did not give his audience any guidance as to where he wanted to go. He just started with his thoughts about the two articles using the construct of the "etic-emic" continuum, which had not been addressed in the class before. Therefore, it was possible that by bringing up a new theoretical construct with which other students may not have been familiar and by assuming that everyone would understand what he was talking about, Jason kept a distance between himself and other students.



Jason's presupposition that "everyone is in the same textual space" was revealed in another discourse-based interview when he used the wrong term "diglossia" for "dialogia" in his message in the first asynchronous discussion, which in fact had totally different meanings. Jason did not bother to correct because he thought other students would get the right term on their own: "Here I got the wrong term, 'diglossia.' I meant 'dialogia.' And I actually thought of reposting something like, 'I meant dialogic setting.' But it doesn't matter. People will know what I mean. I just assumed people would understand" (Discourse-based Interview, October 27).

Not only did he not consider the audience's backgrounds, his writing style in this discussion somewhat contradicted what the students expected to see in this form of discussion. He said how he wanted to sound like an academic in any writing settings.

I don't know if I was conscious of that at the time, but I just think that it's just become so indoctrinated into my mind, "Can I make a blank statement without theoretical support?" Maybe I always base stuff on my previous experiences, we should be doing. But when it comes to writing it, maybe because of the fact that it's written, I'm kind of safeguarding with theory, not trying to stretch out into the 'I think' 'I feel' category. (Discourse-based Interview, November 27)

It is interesting how Jason's group members reacted to his message that presupposed "everyone is in the same textual space" and that wanted to sound academic. As it happens, the group members either avoided his message or struggled to find an open space, but failed to do so. Mary, for example, felt that Jason's message was not very communicative:

I noticed other people tend to sound much more academic in this setting. For example, Jason, in a way, he sounds very formal. Again, it makes him sound smart and academic. I was like, "Maybe I should be doing that." And at the same time, I kind of feel like, "Okay we communicate here. That's what the point is, to communicate. That should be good enough." (Discourse-based Interview, November 19)

Seunghie mentioned that she needed background information about the construct Jason brought up:

I printed out his message and read it carefully. But I couldn't make sense of what he was talking about. I didn't have background knowledge about that etic versus emic stuff. (Discourse-based Interview, November 22)

Eunjoo's resistance to Jason's message was more complicated:

Jason came in with this response. But this was one of the responses where I didn't know exactly what to say. When I first read it, I thought "I don't think I agree with him." Not only I was not quite familiar with the etic-emic construct, I didn't know exactly if I was getting what he was trying to say. His explanation about the etic-emic construct was not clear to me, so I read some articles that addressed the construct and I know I was disagreeing with him. But my thought was not fully developed at the time and I didn't know how to argue against him without hurting his feelings. So I just withdrew from it. ... I spent so much time in thinking about how I could possibly respond to this message. In the end, I decided not to write anything at all. I now feel bad about not having written anything at all. I should have written back a message even if it's my evolving "unorganized" thought. Who would ever know I was struggling with this message for two hours? At least I should have let them know that I was thinking. (Discourse-based Interview, November 25)

Eunjoo's comments pointed to the importance of interlocking responsibilities both the writer and the reader have to each other in maintaining the intertextual chain of communication, who should consider the audience's backgrounds and who should complement the writer's initial effort to bring up a new construct with her own understanding of the writer's intention.

### **Methodological Issues in the Intertextual Analysis**

In this intertextual analysis of CMC discourse, I have identified the complex processes of 1) appropriating others' words and reaccentuating them with their own intentions; 2) creating a potential base of abductive rules; 3) making the renewal of meanings in all new contexts beyond the given sphere of activity; 4) keeping a constant intertextual balance between centripetal and centrifugal forces; and 5) coming to grips with or ignoring the historical life of discourse. Much of my analysis of CMC texts was complemented by discourse-based interviews to obtain more holistic insights into the participants' thoughts and reasons underlying the words on the CMC texts. As Bakhtin

(1981) noted, the actual meaning of a given utterance should be understood “against the background of other concrete utterances on the same theme, a background made up of contradictory opinions, points of view and value judgments.” (p. 281). In that respect, the discourse-based interviews helped me to discover the “contextual meaning” of an utterance in all the profundity and complexity of its essence. In order to demonstrate to what extent the contextual meaning of an utterance in the chain of CMC communication can be revealed and commented upon in the discourse-based interviews, I want to show the following long excerpt (actual text transcript coupled with discourse-based interview data) drawn from the second asynchronous discussion.

#1

Date: Fri Nov 15 2002 3:07 pm

Author: Rubin

Subject: Re: Faigley predicts Moje

When we talk about including differing cultures and expressions in classroom discourse, somehow these cultures must want to be known in order to participate in them. One would not know that some foreign students' cultures do not encourage talking to the teacher unless a student from that culture divulged this information. Moje would not have know the difference between tagging and graffiti, colors and fashion, oddities of spelling and slang unless let partially into the culture. Yet there is an admission that the culture was not completely open, and therefore hidden.

In order for language to be a mediational means to social and cultural experience, the "insiders" have to be open to the "outsiders" inclusion inot the experience.

This is my third venture into graduate school, my third discipline, and I've lost count of the number of the community discourse. Words, phrases, terms, et.al. which should be a mediational means for learning through language often seem more of a barrier -- especially unusual terms learned in one discipline which are used by another to mean something completely different (e.g. our discussion in class of the way "text" is used by various disciplines). Not always are the "insiders" open to sharing their experience with others, and I've sat in on discussions where not knowing the language not only branded me as outside the discipling, but also was used to exclude and distance me in some venues.

### **Context revealed in a discourse-based interview**

Yoonhee: There was a kind of intense conversation going on here when you wrote this message.

Rubin: Oh yeah.

Yoonhee: People picked up on your comment and there was a conversation going on after that.

Rubin: We were talking about different cultures and more of excluding people from the power position, but that's not always the case. You know, we kind of choose by our language which social group and cultural group we are going to be part of. We always exclude others. And as I said here, I'm from a different discipline and the way conversation is going sometimes excludes me because I don't have that language, the educational psychology as a language. Sometimes that's an intentional barrier, and other times that's my choice of being part of a particular culture, so the way I use language also excludes other people. So, I don't think it's necessarily the constraints of power positioning.

Yoonhee: So, when you wrote this particular message, what was the motivation for it?

Rubin: I think my major concern was, I was kind of responding to a couple of messages that had been said. Yang makes a point that discourse community is more valued by society and there was one before that. Hillary was talking about cultural blindness. The idea of valuing by the society as being the hallmark of what is exclusiveness and inclusiveness, I don't particularly think that's a hallmark of it. I wanted to jump in and say, "It's not necessarily." Positioning by the society is not always a mark of being insiders and outsiders. Much of it is what we choose to be by language use. I guess my argument was more of language use as mediating culture and society rather than something that puts you in position of power and less power. (November 21)

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#2

Date: Fri Nov 15 2002 4:02 pm

Author: Rita

Subject: Re: Faigley predicts Moje

Rubin,

Your point is well said. And also well supported by the articles we've read this week. I think all the authors are ultimately pointing to the same insight you expressed - the need for educators, students, human beings to be open and inviting towards all types of discourse and not just the ones with which they're most familiar. Your description of words and phrases as barriers is so true. I've often felt that same unsettling (and frustrating) experience in different classroom situations. You're right, although language is so often a barrier, it really should be a bridge.

**Context revealed in a discourse-based interview**

Yoonhee: This was a response to Rubin. You kind of agreed with him.  
Rita: When I read Rubin's for the first time, I felt that he was implying that the responsibility is on both insiders and outsiders. So I interpreted that as saying, "Both groups should work together." Sometimes insiders might carry more responsibility, but outsiders might have to carry more. ( November 26)

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#3

Date: Fri Nov 15 2002 6:02 pm

Author: Pei

Subject: Re: Faigley predicts Moje

Rubin,

I am curious -

When you say "the culture was not completely open, and therefore hidden" and '... the "insiders" have to be open to the "outsiders" inclusion ... ,' does it make any differences to you when the "insiders" are the ones with power (such as certain disciplines you mentioned) or are the marginalized ones (such as the gansters)?

If you sat in in a discussion carried on by Moje's teenagers and could not understand the language, would you feel the same way as the way you described - " ... exclude and distance me in some venues" ?

### **Context revealed in a discourse-based interview**

Yoonhee: You sort of challenged Rubin's point of view.

Pei: Actually I was challenging Rubin here because he was lumping it together. He was saying like, when he was using Moje, he lumped that into what he experienced. To me, I see those as two different things, one is a group in power and the other one was totally oppressed, was put aside. To me, I wasn't sure whether he could see that difference. I challenged that because his view is not uncommon and I finally said it. In fact I had a conversation with my coworker and I think Rubin's position is similar to a lot of other people's position. I don't think he took into consideration the fact that sometimes insiders become insiders for a reason. To me, he held a position that insiders have to open up for us to establish a relationship. I disagree with that. I didn't say it, but I challenged him by asking a question like, "If you were in this group rather than that group, would you feel the same way?" (November 20)

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#4

Date: Fri Nov 15 2002 7:05 pm

Author: Nancy

Subject: Re: Faigley predicts Moje

Such a good question, Pei! I wonder whether that is true. People who are in power often don't ever feel like outsiders. They simply feel uninterested or condescending toward the groups they don't understand.

### **Context revealed in a discourse-based interview**

Yoonhee: How did you interpret Rubin's message?

Nancy: I don't know what he was saying, but what I'm interpreting that he's saying is that you change from being an insider to an outsider depending on which class you are taking or which group you are talking to. When you are an outsider, the insiders have to be open to your experiences. So I thought he was saying that, back to Hillary's comment about "I didn't know about other cultures' way of talking in class," that she was on the insider, and that unless she was willing to hear about these other experiences, she would have not understood them. That's how I interpreted.

Yoonhee: Some interpreted like you, but others didn't.

Nancy: At least, Rita was not upset. At least she was saying, "Your description of words and phrases as barriers is so true,"

Yoonhee: That's what Rita picked up on Rubin's.

Nancy: What Rita was saying is how I understood Rubin. So then Pei's asking, "Does it make a difference if insiders have no power versus they have power?"

That's such a lovely question that needs to be added to what he had said. So I commented on Pei's message. (November 21)

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#5

Date: Fri Nov 15 2002 7:50 pm

Author: Rubin

Subject: Re: Faigley predicts Moje

Would I feel the same way? No, and yes. I have been in both positions -- outsider of both power groups and fringe groups. There is a difference of perception in relations to the two groups, but there is still a sense of distance and exclusion.

I have also felt some of this while traveling in foreign countries where I had a rudimentary (and sometimes not even that) grasp of the language. To some extent, not knowing the language used, idioms, colloquialisms, keeps you from being a full participant in the communication process.

### **Context revealed in a discourse-based interview**

Yoonhee: There was a kind of response from Pei. She was asking directly this particular question. And then you responded to it.

Rubin: That's more of a sense, an internal sense of more power and less power, but I don't think that's necessarily reflected in the exclusion and inclusion. And I

learned that as I traveled in other countries where I did not know the language or did not understand a lot of idiomatic phrases and things, not having that I wasn't a full participant within that culture. So part of that is that if you don't know the culture of language as used in the society, you are truly an outsider because you cannot participate in the discourse whether you are in powerful position or not. (November 21)

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#6

Date: Fri Nov 15 2002 8:04 pm

Author: Yujin

Subject: Re: Faigley predicts Moje

Pei, I am glad that you bring up this question. I realize some people who are in more powerful position are not interested in hearing stories of other people from a different identity group or people with different culture background. They don't see the different perspectives and try to evaluate minority group in power with their own ruler. Therefore, insiders with less power try to reveal their unique culture and share with other people but they are likely to be ignored by outsiders with relatively more power.

Marginalized students are less powerful than teachers or principal at school so that their way of changing thought and experience is ignored and not considered seriously.

### **Context revealed in a discourse-based interview**

Yoonhee: So you responded to Pei's message here.

Yujin: Yeah, this was really a sensitive topic. Many people before me had already posted something in response to Pei. I thought Pei's question was very important.

Yoonhee: What you described here in this message was based on your experiences?

Yujin: Yes. You know, we are minorities here in the U. S. What I have always felt is that my American peers are not very much interested in other cultures, cultural and linguistic differences. Whenever I tried to talk about our culture, they were simply saying, "Cool!" But they didn't really want to listen to it, or learn about it. It's so true that insiders of a particular culture are often ignored by outsiders with more power. (November 26)

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#7

Date: Fri Nov 15 2002 7:05 pm

Author: Vivien

Subject: Re: Faigley predicts Moje

I think it's true that we have to know that the other cultures exist but I somehow do not think it is only their responsibility to let us in. To me it

seems possible that they do not let outsiders in because we have excluded them for so long. I think we have to seem willing to learn their ways of doing things and then make an effort to help them make their voices heard.

Just my thoughts!

### **Context revealed in a discourse-based interview**

Yoonhee: I guess there was a little argument going on here.

Vivien: Yes there was.

Yoonhee: You were responding to?

Vivien: I was responding to Rubin.

Yoonhee: How did you interpret Rubin's comment?

Vivien: I thought that what he said was very, what's the word? I know it's easy to be idealistic about social changes, and I try not to always be that way. But when I read his comment, I thought, "Wow, he had this privileged perspective, white male perspective," and I just thought that's not the whole picture for me. I thought that Pei asked a really good question, but I had an immediate strong reaction to his comment. Yeah, he was basically saying like that. The outsiders are excluding the insiders. I didn't really agree with that. Having been an outsider myself in other situations, part of the reason I was an outsider was, yeah, it was not because I was excluding other people. Maybe I misunderstood, but I didn't really think that they are responsible for opening up to let us in. So I was thinking like, it goes back to the computer whiz, it's not necessarily his job to let us in. I think the authorities, it's their job to do that. I guess I did not interpret it as two-way street as Rubin was saying that. If he did see that, I guess I was constructing meaning that it's a two-way street only to a certain extent. I didn't feel that he meant a true two-way street. I guess Pei felt the same way. (November 26)

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#8

Date: Fri Nov 15 2002 7:53 pm

Author: Rita

Subject: Re: Faigley predicts Moje

You're so right. Communication is definitely a 2-way street. I hope that my earlier message didn't imply that outsiders' should carry the responsibility of letting the insiders in. Quite the contrary! And, Vivien, I think you hit the nail on the head when you mentioned that outsiders remain outsiders because they've been excluded for such a long time. Hopefully, as more and more importance and recognition is given to varied and different forms of communication, that 2-way street will become more balanced.

Happy weekend everyone!

### **Context revealed in a discourse-based interview**



Yoonhee: After posting your first message in response to Rubin, you came back quickly with this message.

Rita: Oh yeah. When I saw everyone's response, I was worried that people might think that I was saying that the insiders have to carry all the responsibilities. And I didn't mean that. I don't really know. It could be that I just understood what I wanted to understand in Rubin's comment because that's how I viewed it. I didn't have a chance to talk to him to see what exactly he meant, but I didn't definitely want to be identified as a person saying like, "Insiders shouldn't have to do that." I was very nervous about it. It was interesting though. His response, in my opinion, caused a controversy, especially among international students. It's funny because I had been a student in Italy. I had been in their position, so I totally understand what it's like to be considered as international students. I realized that sometimes I would stay very quiet and I wouldn't participate. I was thinking I should be a little bit more outgoing and that native Italians should be more inviting. But instead we stayed kind of apart. So I was thinking that both groups should work together, but yeah, I don't know if that's what Rubin meant. I like to think that Rubin meant both people. But after I was seeing everyone's response, I'm not sure that's what he meant. I hope he meant that. But it was interesting to read everyone's response. (November 26)

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#9

Date: Fri Nov 15 2002 8:24 pm

Author: Yang

Subject: Re: Faigley predicts Moje

I completely agree. Moje got inside the gansta adolescents' world because these kids felt she was genuinely interested in and cared about what they had to say in their literay practices. She would not be able to get that insight if she had treated those graffiti and tags as sheer expressions of deviance or resistance like other researchers.

Sometimes it just takes an open mind to understand better what others are coming from. Take the international students in our class as an example. Though many of us may not speak up or elaborate about our views in class, when it comes to on-line written discussions, you can learn a lot more about our backgrounds from the responses we have about these readings. Similary, I can also learn from the written discussions more about those American students who don't often speak up in class. I guess that is exactly why we need to have various mediums of communication in the classroom so that we can hear every one's voice.

### **Context revealed in a discourse-based interview**

Yoonhee: Your next message was written as a response to?

Yang: Basically I was thinking about Rubin. I think originally Hillary posted something. She said something about how she didn't realize international students' different ways of talking in class in their home countries. When I saw that message, first I was surprised. I was like, "You didn't know that?" And then I was thinking maybe I have to post something, and then I saw Rubin's message. I kind of felt that his message was blaming international students for not opening up. He was like, "How would I know if you didn't tell me?" and I was thinking about how I should respond to it. I knew that I wanted to say something, but I didn't know how to say it. So I waited a little bit, and there were people who were posting other messages. Some of the messages were what I wanted to say. I think Pei said something about that too. I was impressed by her again. Her response was really to the point, like she kind of talking about something else, but she was kind of responding to what Rubin has to say. It's like, "If you are in a more powerful position, are you willing to listen to them?" And then Vivien posted something, and Rita posted something. I had to say something. I kind of related to everything else they had to say. But I was basically thinking about Rubin's message. And I just said that I agree with the other messages that had been posted in response to Rubin. (November 19)

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#10

Date: Fri Nov 15 2002 8:19 pm

Author: Pei

Subject: Re: Faigley predicts Moje

Vivien - I just happened to have a conversation with a co-worker on the "ism" (e.g., sexism) issues this morning. He held the position that it is the responsibility of the ism-targeted individuals (e.g., women) to make the changes. He encourages these individuals to take on the responsibility. (Actually, this is not the first time I heard comments like this.) He does not think he is obligated to share the responsibility. I could not convince him differently.

I am bringing this conversation up because of what you said and I agree with you. To me, the youth in Moje's story (and many other marginalized people) became a close knit(?) to draw strength to survive the oppression and make sense of the circumstances. Why are they on the "other" side to begin with? This should have never happened. To me, for us to ask them to open up or take the sole responsibility to make the change is to wrong them twice over.

### **Context revealed in a discourse-based interview**

Yoonhee: And then your message was for Vivien

Pei: Vivien was also challenging Rubin's idea here. She is more tactful. She said, "Just my thought." I could continue with her comment because that morning I ran into a friend of mine at work and we are good friends. He told me that the oppressed are responsible for their situations. And I was like, "You are telling me

that if people are oppressed, it's only their responsibility to come out and confront the situation? I think that's garbage." I told him. (November 20)

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#11

Date: Fri Nov 15 2002 9:00 pm

Author: Vivien

Subject: Re: Faigley predicts Moje

Pei,

"To wrong them twice over." I like the way you expressed your point. Rita, Yang, Rubin, I think all of you have very interesting and valid perspectives on this delicate topic. It seems hard sometimes to talk about such complex issues.

### **Context revealed in a discourse-based interview**

Yoonhee: After you read all the comments, you came back Friday night with this comment.

Vivien: Because I thought what Pei said was great. "Wow, that's crazy." It's crazy to talk to women like that. But I thought I had already brought up something, and I didn't want to talk more about it. So I did think that they had an interesting perspective. I don't disregard Rubin's perspective because he is coming from a white male perspective, and I know that recently white males have a lot of criticism too. I just wanted to say, "I want to think about it. I'm not completely ignoring it." And I thought that it's a hard topic to discuss in a friendly way.

Yoonhee: Actually Pei interpreted your message as implying you don't want to talk about it any more.

Vivien: I didn't mean that, though. I wasn't going to talk about it, but I wouldn't care if other people talked about it. For me, I was finished because nothing I would say would be good. Maybe it's just who I am. Once I made my point, once people know my stance, if I continue, it will just disintegrate into something that's not productive. For me, it was finished because Rubin said his, I said mine, Pei said hers, Yang said hers. But I'm sorry that Pei felt that way.

Yoonhee: So you didn't want to continue the sort of debate on the issue?

Vivien: I don't think that debate is bad. I don't know, this is off-subject, but my husband adamantly opposes religion, Christianity. I ask him why. But he will not change his mind, but he has had this endless discussion with many, many people, and he goes into the discussion simply to argue his point, and he never accepts anything that anyone says. "So why do you do that?" Arguing something, it might be open to change. I think that is constructive. But arguing for the purpose of arguing, personally for me, it's kind of negative. So I'm not opposed to people

broadening my views, but when I think I feel pretty strongly about the thing, I don't continue. People can continue. That's fine. (November 26)

### **Context revealed in a discourse-based interview**

Yoonhee: How did you interpret Vivien's message?

Pei: I thought Vivien was uncomfortable with continuing the conversation. I can see that she didn't want to continue. So she said she liked the way I said, "We wrong them twice." She also said, "I appreciated Rubin too." That, to me, said, "I don't want to discuss it any more." That's usually concluding remarks. I saw her point and I dropped the conversation. But I would go on if Rubin came back earlier. (November 20)

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#12

Date: Fri Nov 15 2002 11:34 pm

Author: Rubin

Subject: Re: Faigley predicts Moje

Let me add another perspective. During my years in the military, I belonged to what is known as an elite unit (i.e. 75th Ranger Regiment). If there were another of this unit in class, not only could we converse openly in class using language, symbols, and phrases which no one else would understand, but we would do so and not bother to engage and enlighten the "unknowing."

We would do this because we were insiders who shared a common heritage, training, and experience(s) (both good and bad) which made us part of an elite social and cultural group. We would not bother to engage outsiders because the common wisdom of this elite group is that you either "know" or you don't.

Sometimes it has nothing to do with the power group or some oppressive element. Sometimes the representation of oneself or a group through language use and process is by choice in order to maintain separateness. So language mediates both knowing and unknowing?

### **Context revealed in discourse-based interview**

Yoonhee: It seems like people keep talking about power issues. I was curious about why you were saying here, "it has nothing to do with power."

Rubin: I had a position where I was in an inner city. There was 99 % Blacks in the community, and there were cultures, traditions, heritages, and certain ways of talking that were representative of that culture. And I was definitely an outsider to them, and it took me a year and a half to gain some trust from some of them. And as I found out more, a lot of it was not so much just because we have excluded them so long, but a lot of it was by their choice. They chose to be part of this particular culture that they have grown up with. But then I also think of this

example of a military group, where we understood the language in there, actually we kind of liked that because we can talk openly and publicly about things. If you don't know the language, you are an outsider, we don't care. I think there's a number of things going on. It's not necessarily having to do with oppression or keeping people away. It's by choice or by different cultures' social expressions as parallel to the main culture.

Yoonhee: When people read your comment, some students felt that you were implying one way of opening up.

Rubin: It may be my age. In a lot of situations, power issues come up and often I don't see them.

Yoonhee: So throughout the conversation, you highlighted the point that it's not always power.

Rubin: I don't think it's only power. That may be my focus, this is not a single influence, that there are other things acting on it, that influence who is an insider and who is an outsider. The issue is not so much who's got the power, but the cultural aspects of language being used.

Yoonhee: Could you tell me more about the community you lived in?

Rubin: I was living in a section of the town which was about 99 % blacks. In my neighborhood I was the only white person. I was known as the crazy white guy down the road because I was living there. They thought I was a nut, living in this community.

Yoonhee: Were you doing some research there or?

Rubin: No, I was working to revitalize inner city congregation. It was culturally considerably different from where I used to live. ... Part of the truth in what they were saying was that I had to be open to listening to what this culture had to say, what people had to say through their language, in order to incorporate that into my own life and work. So there is some truth in what they said. Okay, I had to be more open so that I would not create a barrier, so that I would not be an outsider. (November 21)

From this excerpt, one can see that in the discourse-based interviews the students engaged in many reflective and analytic observations about their own processes of appropriating or resisting others' words and reaccentuating them with their own intentions that were not directly available in the discussion transcripts. Truly remarkable is the way the interviews revealed the participants' different motives and interests that in turn compelled the participants to weave their discourse with the multiple resources drawn from their life experiences. I suggest that there is a rich history behind every piece of utterance, if only every speaker had the opportunity to reveal it, and that the discourse-

based interview is one very valuable means to discovering the “contextual” meaning behind the texts.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **LAYER 1: COMPONENTS OF UTTERANCE**

Throughout this study, I have been interested primarily in the concrete forms of utterances and the concrete conditions of the life of utterances, their interrelations, and their interactions in the CMC speech activity that were embedded in the class. In the sociocultural analysis (Chapter 4), I presented a description of classroom culture in terms of where the students came from, what was the teacher's instructional philosophy, how the class was organized, and what kinds of activities, assignments and evaluation methods were offered. In doing so, I was paving the way for analyzing how the various values, beliefs, and practices embedded in the context of culture may enable or constrain what can be said in the CMC speech activity. In the intertextual analysis (Chapter 5), I explored dialogical intertextual relations and interactions among CMC utterances that pervade individual utterances, suggesting that CMC texts are constructed in an unending dialogic web of cross-connected utterances and responses, each piece of CMC text, each utterance, depending on its occasion and context for its very existence, for its comprehensibility. In this chapter, I wish to turn to an analysis of ever-present internal dialogism that pervades each individual utterance, focusing on what are the essential components that build into any concrete utterance.

This kind of analysis is appropriate because in order to investigate the dialogic nature of language to its fullest extent, we need to focus on, as Bakhtin advised, "both the study of kinds and forms of dialogic relations among utterances" in context (what I have explored in the previous chapters) "and their typological forms (factors of utterances)" (1986, p. 108). By finally turning to factors of utterances, I hope to create a more comprehensive picture of how one's utterance is both constrained and enabled by who she is as she speaks relative to the topic, the addressee, and speech genres in an intertextually-linked CMC speech activity situated in a particular sociocultural context.

In analyzing components of a concrete utterance, I first need to specify how I determined the boundaries of the utterance. Bakhtin made it clear that “regardless of how varied utterances may be in terms of their length, their content, and their compositional structure, they have common structural features as units of speech communication and, above all, quite clear-cut boundaries” (1986, p. 71). Bakhtin then claimed that the boundaries of each concrete utterance as a unit of speech communication are determined by a change of speakers. Bakhtin explained this as follows:

Any utterance – from a short (single-word) rejoinder in everyday dialogue to the large novel or scientific treatise – has, so to speak, an absolute beginning and absolute ending: its beginning is preceded by the utterances of others, and its end is followed by the responsive utterances of others (or, although it may be silent, others’ active responsive understanding, or finally, a responsive action based on this understanding). The speaker ends his utterance in order to relinquish the floor to the other or to make room for the other’s active responsive understanding. The utterance is not a conventional unit, but a real unit, clearly delimited by the change of speaking subjects, which ends by relinquishing the floor to the other, as if with a silent *dixi*, perceived by the listeners (as a sign) that the speaker has finished. (1986, 71-72)

The change of speakers can be mostly clearly observed in actual everyday dialogue where the utterances of the interlocutors in dialogue alternate. However, Bakhtin noted that this change of speakers can also be observed even in complexly structured and specialized works. He wrote:

Complexly structured and specialized works of various scientific and artistic genres, in spite of all the ways in which they differ from rejoinders in dialogue, are, by nature the same kind of units of speech communication. They, too, are clearly demarcated by a change of speaking subjects, and these boundaries, while retaining their external clarity, acquire here a special internal aspect because the speaking subject – in this case, the author of the work – manifests his own individuality in his style, his world view, and in all aspects of the design of his work. (p. 75)

In this study on CMC texts, it was a rather straight-forward task to determine the boundaries of utterances because in the asynchronous CMC activity, CMC messages, just like rejoinders in everyday dialogue, were clearly demarcated by a change of authors (speakers). Therefore, all CMC entries were treated as utterances however varied they



may have been in terms of their length, their content, and their compositional structure. In what follows, with the speaker serving as a point of departure of analysis, I will show how each utterance is shaped at the crossroads of the speaker, the topic, the addressee, and speech genres, which are in turn inextricable from the various local, institutional, and socio-historical conditions within which the CMC speech activity is situated. In presenting the data and their descriptive analysis, I will explain each of the components, speaker, topic as hero, addressivity, and speech genres sequentially, and then I will turn to the ultimate condition of any utterance created in this CMC activity - the reciprocal simultaneity that engages each of these categories in dialogue with each other.

### **Speaker**

In constructing utterances in CMC, the students (speakers) brought to the class their “autobiographical self,” a self associated with their different personal histories, value systems, goals, interests, and definitions of the field. Although this self arose out of each student’s life experiences and thus was more associated with a person’s sense of past, it was shown to be ever-changing in a struggle with her “discoursal self,” a self “constructed through the discourse characteristics of a text which is related to values, beliefs and power relations in the social context in which they were written” (Ivanic, 1998, p. 25). The student’s discoursal self often contradicted the autobiographical self as conveyed consciously or unconsciously in a particular utterance in CMC, and at the same time, in a constant dialogue with the topic, the audience, and speech genres as well as the autobiographical self, it served to appropriate or resist the words of others and accent or re-accent them in personal ways in a chain of CMC communication. The following utterances created by Pei, Seunghee, and Minh, will each exemplify the complex processes of negotiating their autobiographical and discoursal self in a struggle to construct a meaningful utterance in this particular communicative context. The first utterance drawn from the second asynchronous discussion is one I presented in the previous chapter on intertextual links.

Date: Fri Nov 15 2002 6:02 pm  
Author: Pei  
Subject: Re: Faigley predicts Moje

Rubin,

I am curious -

When you say "the culture was not completely open, and therefore hidden" and '... the "insiders" have to be open to the "outsiders" inclusion ... ,' does it make any differences to you when the "insiders" are the ones with power (such as certain disciplines you mentioned) or are the marginalized ones (such as the gangsters)?

If you sat in in a discussion carried on by Moje's teenagers and could not understand the language, would you feel the same way as the way you described - " ... exclude and distance me in some venues" ?

The speaker of this particular utterance, Pei, a Taiwanese woman in her 50s, was in a doctoral program in Educational Psychology, Research Methodology. As a recent returnee to the academy after having spent many years in a “real” world, Pei wanted to “learn and experience something new” in this course on psycholinguistics. Pei differentiated herself from the other “young” students in the class because of her age as well as her experiences she had had outside the academia: “Because I have worked in child protection services, I know what the world, the part of the world is like, so I can put on a different perspective.” With that unique sense of who she is and where she came from, Pei came to the CMC speech activity wanting to get a different perspective on things that had been discussed: “To me, in discussion, if you only try to say things you agree with people, then you’ll miss something important. There are always many different angles to look at things and I’m trying to do that.”

However, as the CMC speech activity unfolded, she reported that she felt a little frustrated, because “people were more likely to practice the politeness principle, people wanted to be polite, so we tended to agree with people more.” Her struggle with coming terms with her true self who wanted to say something different intensified when she did not know who exactly she was talking to in this speech activity:

I don’t know where people are coming from and therefore I don’t know whether people are genuinely agreeing with people or they just want to do it as one way of

discussing it. So, I mean, I have a different way of approaching the discussion.  
(Discourse-based Interview, November 20)

At this particular moment of struggle, Pei created the particular utterance, showing her way of orchestrating the inner conflicts. In a discourse-based interview, Pei described how she came to choose to respond to Rubin's message and how she selected a particular style to address her concerns regarding Rubin's message: "Actually I was challenging Rubin here because he was lumping it together. To me I see those as two different things, one is a group in power and the other one was totally oppressed." Pei chose Rubin's message because she could see something Rubin could not see. But in expressing her concerns, she took on a voice that was not very confrontational or direct, something that she perceived as contradicting her true self. Because she did not know her addressee very well, Pei chose not to take on her usual voice. Instead, she demarcated Rubin's words in quotation marks and cautiously reaccented them with her own words (would you feel the same way as the way you described - " ... exclude and distance me in some venues"?). In a discourse-based interview, Pei explained how this "polite" style contradicted her autobiographical self:

When I talked to my co-worker who is a good friend of mine, I was like, "That's garbage." I was like that. I can be so direct. I didn't say it to Rubin here because I didn't know much of his backgrounds like where he is coming from. So, I challenged him by asking a question. (Discourse-based Interview, November 20)

With all this compromising style of writing that she perceived as contradicting her autobiographical self, Pei was nevertheless true to herself, to her own orientation, which was to challenge a viewpoint that she perceived did not allow for a negotiation. For Pei, a new concept of human personality came to fruition in that particular utterance, one that is not confrontational but not accommodating either, still groping for a discourse of its own and preparing the ground for it.

The second example I want to present as a contrast is an utterance constructed by a speaker, Seunghye, who, unlike Pei, perceived herself as an "inexperienced" graduate student. Seunghye, a Korean female in her 20s at the time of the study, was pursuing her

master's degree in Foreign Language Education with a dual purpose of improving her English in a target culture and getting a degree in TESOL. Her major motivation for taking this course on psycholinguistics was to explore topics for her master's thesis. At the beginning of the semester, Seunghee was very much excited about all the "exciting" projects and assignments embedded in the course. At the same time, she felt overwhelmed by the sheer amount of reading for the course. Seunghee was worried that she might not keep up with all the weekly readings, and in fact she was not able to finish most of the readings assigned for each week. She was also very self-conscious of her lack of disciplinary knowledge and teaching experience, which in turn prevented her from speaking up in face-to-face meetings. Seunghee described her situation as follows:

Right now, I am academically immature because I'm just a master's student. And I am a slow, struggling reader. I also think that I am lagging far behind these highly experienced students. It's like we are on a different starting point. You know, most of our classmates are older than me and they have many years of teaching experiences. So they can talk and write about many teaching-related issues with authority based on their own life experiences. I can't participate as much because I don't have that background. (Background Interview, September 16)

Although Seunghee felt that she was academically "immature" and on the periphery among "highly experienced" classmates, she was very positive about her potential "growth" from interacting with her classmates online. She said:

When I read an article by myself, I have a hard time figuring out what it is talking about. It's hard for me to find a main idea. But my classmates go beyond the literal understanding of the article and apply the concepts to their own everyday life situations. In addition to deepening my understanding of the readings by reading their entries, I could learn cultures and other stuff. Some students have 10 to 20 years of teaching experiences and other students came from different countries and cultures, so the diversity of the class helps us learn from each other. (Background Interview, September 16)

Despite all these positive attitudes towards the collaborative learning the class promoted, Seunghee nevertheless struggled to find her own place in the CMC speech activity. Believing that she was not comparable to others in the depth of understanding of each article, she often ignored messages that addressed issues beyond her current disciplinary

knowledge and her conceptual framework. Instead she consistently looked for messages that were comprehensible to her and that she could respond to with a certain degree of confidence and authority. The following utterance is one example of her having made strenuous efforts to overcome her lack of disciplinary knowledge by invoking her “autobiographical” self to participate in this speech activity “equally” with her advanced peers.

Date: Fri Oct 4 2002 1:50 pm  
Author: Seunghee  
Subject: Re: Too Ideal...

I agree with Minho, esp. because we're from the same culture. In my high school days, a new German teacher came. Her teaching style refreshed us a lot. There was a discussion, sts' role plays and it was quite dialogic. At that time, German was one of the required courses in the college entrance exam. So, the other classes were definitely lecture-based, monologic ones. Thus, a while after, we could see she was in conflict with other German teachers. The school system was too inflexible to accept different approaches, and there were incessant concerns about the possible drawbacks of something new. (eg. falling classroom average grades)

However, despite the difficulty to be feasible in a certain culture, I think that dialogic classrooms in itself have many good aspects. It's been just one year since I came here. Adjusted to the lecture-based instruction, firstly, I had difficulty in some discussion-based classes I took here. But, I think that despite the reduced lecture, I could learn a lot by my peers. Most of them were very experienced teachers, so they shared their teaching experiences and understanding several discussions. I, as a foreigner and inexperienced teacher, could learn a lot by my more advanced peers.

But, again I think because of what Minho pointed still in some culture, the "dialogic class" is TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE.

Seunghee began her utterance by agreeing with Minho (“I agree with Minho, esp. because we’re from the same culture”) and thereby set the stage for her autobiographical self to play a role. In a discourse-based interview, Seunghee explained why in the first place she chose Minho’s message to respond to: “Minho wrote a message that I could sympathize with because he talked about why dialogic class is hard to realize in Korean educational contexts. This is the area I could say based on my own experiences.” It is interesting to see how Seunghee turned her backgrounds, her sense of

the past into resources with which she could (re)position herself equally with English-speaking peers. Seunghee brought her autobiographical self to the situation of the utterance, writing about significant events in her life regarding the given topic, (e.g., a new German teacher in her high school days) and therefore the distinctive aspects of her utterance in the beginning pertained to her sense of her own past.

The second part of her entry, however, showed how the Bakhtinian speaker is not “the bearer of inner lived experience and her reaction is neither a passive feeling nor a receptive perception” (Bakhtin, 1990, p. 8). Now, Seunghee tried to challenge what she wrote in the first paragraph by invoking a counter-example from her most current life experience as an international graduate student who had learned much from her peers (experienced teachers) in dialogic classes since she came to the U. S., as manifested in her text, “I ,as a foreigner and inexperience teacher, could learn a lot by my more advanced peers.” The last part of her entry captured a moment of the speaker engaging in a discursal negotiation with the addressed audience, Minhø. Seunghee’s discursal self speaking presently in this textual space was aware of the power relations with Minhø. Seunghee perceived Minhø to be a person of authority because Minhø was older than she was, and he was an advanced doctoral student whereas she was a master’s student. Seunghee said:

Because this is the topic Minhø first initiated, I didn’t want to confront him in what so ever. You know, he is my Korean senior student and he has all these experiences, and I was aware that he would ultimately read my response. I was struggling with how to end this message after I said all this about my experiences. I wasn’t ready to suggest some solutions about how to incorporate the dialogical approach to Korean educational contexts, which would be a perfect conclusion of my entry. But I was not ready to go there. The alternative was to back up again what Minhø said about the difficulties in applying the concepts to Korean educational contexts. So there came this last sentence, “But, again i think because of what Minhø pointed still in some culture, the "dialogic class" is TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE.” (Discourse-based Interview, October 19)

From her comment, one can see that Seunghee did not orchestrate her own intentions in the precise sense of the word, partially because she lacked the necessary expertise or knowledge to help her make a better closing to her utterance and partially because she

felt it more important to negotiate the power relations with Minho in the social context in which her utterance was written. However, Seunghee's own awareness that she could have made her utterance sound better (by offering some suggestions as to how to incorporate the dialogical approach to Korean educational contexts) did make essential preparations for this orchestration.

The last speaker I wish to present in this analysis of a speaker as a constitutive component of an utterance is Minho who, as the reader may recall, initiated the "Too Ideal" thread in the first asynchronous discussion. Here, I want to present one of his utterances created in the second asynchronous discussion in an attempt to highlight how the speaker's positions do not always stay the same in the process of constructing a particular utterance. As Bakhtin (1986) said,

The person who speaks approaches the text with his autobiographical self, seeing things from his own already formed world view, from his own viewpoint, from his own position. These positions determine his evaluation to a certain degree, but they themselves do not always stay the same. (p. 142)

Bakhtin's point is that the speaker's positions are influenced by every speech event, which always introduces something new. In accordance with Bakhtin's perspective, Minho's positions, however greatly determined by his own already formed world views, were shown to be continuously evolving and changing, influenced by new experiences. A doctoral student in the FLE Program, Minho was in his 30s at the time he took this course on psycholinguistics. During his three-year stay in the U.S., he reported, Minho had encountered many different situations and ideas, and, in the process of accommodating the new ideas into his ideological system, he had gone through many changes as a person, as a learner, and as a teacher. What was most striking to Minho was the way American students interacted in the class.

Since I came to the United States, I have found other students particularly those native speakers of English are very good at expressing their ideas. Even though the quality of their talk may not be that good, they are not hesitating to talk. They seem to learn from each other by sharing ideas. I want to learn their attitudes. (Background Interview, September 17)

Close observation of American classrooms and critical reflection on his own learning styles led Minho to appreciate the practices he became involved in the American classes but at the same time to resist some. Created at the crossroads of his ideological changes is this particular utterance. First, notice that he initiated a new topic thread with a reference to the Oprah Winfrey's talk show.

Date: Thu Nov 14 2002 4:07 pm

Author: Minho

Subject: Another form of expressing one's thought

I remember that some of the teenagers who are marginalized in a society showed up in the Oprah Winfrey's talk show. They are normally considered trouble-makers at school and out of school too. The Chicago city has spent so much money cleaning the wall full of graffiti by those gang-connected teens. One guy came up with an idea that their graffiti should not be viewed as a nuisance to society and instead he claimed that it is another medium of communicating and conveying some message to people or at least to their peers.

So the city decided to set up or designate some parts of the walls in the city as a place where these teens can express their thoughts, ideas, values, etc.

I think high of the city's decision as it is indicative of its acknowledgement of the power of unsanctioned literacy tools.

As Moje suggested, it behooves us that we as future teachers, researchers, or leaders in a society need to be more and more open-minded enough to appreciate or reconceptualize a variety form of literacy as tools for our students to express themselves.

Minho started his utterance by introducing a story of "marginalized teenagers" shown on the Oprah Winfrey's talk show and continued the narration until he connected the story with the assigned reading (Moje's article) almost at the end. In a discourse-based interview, Minho admitted that he would not have posted this kind of message if he had adhered to his "old" learning styles:

As for my old preferred writing style, it should be very logical, very well-organized like "I want to talk about this, the reason I am saying this is this and that." I have to explain reasons something like that. So if it had been three years ago, I wouldn't have written something like this, because, you know, the story I brought up here was not quite logically related to what we were talking about. But when I read Moje's article, the marginalized students I saw on Oprah Winfrey show came to my mind. I thought that would be a good story to share with my



classmates. Although I think it would be good if your response did quite fit in the given topic, I've kind of learned by observing my American classmates that sometimes your reflection could be something about what's significant to your life or what's interesting to you, not just about a specific content of the reading. In a way, my concept about what is a good reflective writing has changed.  
(Discourse-based Interview, November 25)

Not only did the speaker, Minho, reveal his changed perception about what is good writing/discussion, he showed in this particular utterance such an understanding and appreciation of the American educational system, something that came as a welcomed surprise to the teacher, given that Minho's ultimate professional goal was to go back to Korea and teach English there. Immediately after the first asynchronous discussion (Recall that Minho initiated the "Too Ideal" thread in which he took on a skeptical voice of new theoretical constructs), Minho said in a discourse-based interview that he had a tendency to think of everything he read from an EFL teacher's perspective, always trying to pose a question as to whether new theoretical constructs can be applied to Korean educational systems. Therefore, one can imagine that Minho would not be interested very much in understanding all those complexities about why things are where they are in the American educational system, because in a way Minho did not have to understand that: He can go home, so he does not have to worry about that. Surprisingly, Minho was developing a deeper understanding of the constructs that transcended the immediate context of that construct (e.g. American educational system and the teachers involved in it) to include indefinite "we as future teachers, researchers, or leaders in the society," as manifested in the closing of his utterance in this second asynchronous discussion: As Moje suggested, it behooves us that we as future teachers, researchers, or leaders in a society need to be more and more open-minded enough to appreciate or reconceptualize a variety form of literacy as tools for our students to express themselves.

A discourse-based interview with him further revealed how the speaker, Minho, did not always stay the same as he was influenced by new experiences.

Yoonhee: In a way, this whole issue about gangsta kids might not be relevant to your disciplinary interest, given that you will go back to Korea. But in this message, you seemed to be very interested in the issue.

Minho: I am aware that all these things I have learned here in the U. S. will not be perfectly applied to Korean educational systems. As I have told you many times, it is the biggest challenge I'm facing right now, I mean, how I can possibly apply these constructs to Korean educational systems to better the lives of our students in Korea. But when I read Moje's article, I really liked the idea here – it's not the teacher but the students who have to be the center of education. The teacher has to figure out what the students are interested in. It's not just about American kids, right? I think I am more open-minded to these ideas compared to three years ago. If I had seen the same Oprah's show in Korea three years ago, I wouldn't have thought that the kids' graffiti should be viewed as another medium of communicating to people. I think since I came here, at least I have learned to look at things with a different eye. (Discourse-based Interview, November 25)

## **Commentary**

The three different speakers, Pei, Seunghee, and Minho constructed their utterances as they defined who they were, what they could do with the given topic, and ultimately what their textual representations conveyed to themselves and their interlocutors. The speakers themselves chose appropriate speech genres and decided what words to appropriate and reaccent to their own intentions in this particular CMC speech activity. By illustrating these three speakers' ways of constructing an utterance, I have tried to suggest that the Bakhtinian speakers were in constant evolving relations with the topic at hand, interlocutors (including the speakers themselves), and available speech genres in constructing a particular utterance in the CMC context. In other words, every utterance positions the speaker with respect to one's self, other speakers, topics to be discussed, and one's repertoire of speech genres. Having illustrated the speakers' projection of their autobiographical and discorsal self into an utterance, the relationship between the speaker and the topic of the discourse is now in order for further scrutiny.

## Topic as Hero

The students (speakers) in the study showed a varying degree of awareness of topic as “hero” in constructing their utterances (Bakhtin, 1990). According to a Bakhtinian perspective, the speaker, in speaking about a given topic in an utterance, does much more than represent the topic; “she enters into a relationship with it in which both subject as hero and speaker are affected by one another” (Halasak, 1999, p. 109). Coming to an understanding of a hero is itself a dialogic activity, one that requires the speaker to engage the hero not as a static entity (e.g., object, body of knowledge) but as a dynamic, changing, living force with which she has a defined, yet shifting relationship.

Before I present the relevant data regarding a topic as hero I observed in this study, I first need to articulate in more detail the notion of *hero* and its generative power as an ideological formulation to provide the reader the necessary conceptual framework for understanding the data I will present in this section. I will begin with Bakhtin’s comments in his earlier work *Art and answerability* (1990) in which he talked mostly about a novelistic “hero.” The term “hero” in this earlier work may be a foreign one when applied to the topic of discourse in the CMC speech activity, but Bakhtin’s reasons for selecting it over “object” were particularly illuminating to my analysis of the students’ utterances created in the CMC speech activity. When treated as an object, the topic of discourse, with no active, generative, or epistemic role assigned to it, has no more control over the construction of an utterance than either the speaker or the listener. When viewed as “hero,” the topic of an utterance serves as a “third person.” In interpreting Bakhtin’s concept of hero, Hakasak (1999) explained the generative power of hero in the construction of an utterance:

By granting such autonomy to the hero, Bakhtin allows for a dialogic relationship in which the hero engages the author in an exchange, a conversation. Like the listener, the hero is never identical to the author. Moreover, the author’s process of coming to understand the hero entails an unmasking of both the hero and herself in relation to the hero, a peeling away of the ‘layers... sedimented upon his [the hero’s] face by our [the author’s and the culture’s] own fortuitous reactions and attitudes and by fortuitous life situations.’ (p. 91)

Although the “hero” of *Art and Answerability* referred, for the most part, to novelistic character, in his later essays, *Speech Genres* (1986), Bakhtin extended the definitions of hero to non-artistic, rhetorical genres and demonstrated the powerful influence of hero as a co-participant that actively engages in a conversation. Bakhtin wrote that the topic of discourse, the “hero,” becomes the “arena where his [speaker’s] opinions meet those of his partners [audience] (in a conversation or dispute about some everyday event) or other viewpoints, world views, trends, theories, and so forth” (p.94). As an arena where opinions meet, converge, and collide, the topic of a discourse may be best described not as a body of discernible knowledge, or even solely as the speaker’s conscious and recollected experiences, but as a collective of others’ topic. Therefore, for Bakhtin, the topic of the speaker’s speech, regardless of what this topic may be, does not become the object of speech for the first time in any given utterance; a given speaker is not the first to speak about it. The topic, as it were, has already been articulated, disputed, elucidated, and evaluated in various ways: “Various viewpoints, world views, and trends cross, converge, and diverge in it” (p. 93).

As the speaker engages a topic as hero, she then must face the complexity and contradiction of voices within the given topic and the daunting task of making up her mind about her own participative orientations toward and relationships with her topic and others’ utterances about that topic. This facing of the complexity, making up of one’s mind, and coming to terms with a topic, is what Bakhtin (1981) refers to as “ideological becoming” – the “process of selectively assimilating the words of others” (p. 342), a “struggle within us for hegemony among various available verbal and ideological points of view, approaches, directions, and values” (p. 346). For Bakhtin, the process of ideological becoming, the struggle in finding and claiming an orientation toward and relationship to a topic, is always an integral part of constructing an utterance.

In light of the Bakhtinian concept of the topic as hero and its generative influence on a life of utterance, I will present four speakers’ active engagement with their topics in the CMC speech activity who sought to affect and be affected by others’ discourses about

a given topic, and whose ideological becoming emerged from the process with voices constructed out of and through the voices of others about the topic.

Date: Thu Nov 14 2002 5:53 pm

Author: Yiping

Subject: Re: Writing as a social activity

There's no doubt that those authors would agree that writing is a social activity. And I also agree with that. They were taking the socioconstructivist view of writing. But sometimes I feel confused about why this school of thought is so popular and become the mainstream in the Psycholinguistic area. Does that mean that it have more power to precisely describe the process of language development more thoroughly and broadly than other perspectives (e.g., cognitive perspective)? Does that mean it subsume and integrate all other perspectives in its model with dynamic and interactive characteristics of each element? OR is it a perspective which it emphasizes more on the relationship between the self and context but pay very few attention on discovering the micro aspect of cognitive development. I ask that because I somehow get a sense that studies conducted by researchers with socioconstructivist' perspective usually favor describing how interaction with others or social context influence the individual's language development but excluding the theme of the micro aspect of cognitive process totally. I don't know, it seemed to me that socioconstructivist perspective only deals with the macro aspect of human learning, it's more like a ecological approach. It seems to ignore the micro part of the cognitive development, which I believe to be probably universal among people coming from different cultures. I am not defending a certain perspective here (maybe you would think I am favoring cognitivism), I just want clarify a question--does socioconstructivist perspective subsume and integrate all other perspectives in its model or it just emphasize understanding the individual's development in social, cultural context. And also I want to address my personal opinion, which is no matter what perspective is mainstream nowadays, I feel every perspective has its merit and all of them are very important and helpful in understanding the human learning process.

In constructing this particular utterance, the speaker, Yiping, had to come into contact, and in conflict, with the ideological positions within the given topic (i.e., writing as a social activity). In a discourse-based interview, Yiping described this as follows:

Yoonhee: So what was your major motivation for writing this particular message?

Yiping: Most of the articles Nancy assigned us to read are about social constructivist points of view. Of course, these readings are too. I don't know, sometimes I feel that something is missing, because in these articles, of course, the authors strongly support a social constructivist view, I don't know, they kind of oppose other perspectives. Sometimes I feel uncomfortable with that.

Sometimes I also think about why the social constructivist view is so popular. Because I have taken some other courses focusing on cognition, I would compare those theories with that.

Yoonhee: Would you say that your intended audience is?

Yiping: All of the students in our group seemed to support the social constructivism. Everyone was like, “I agree with the authors,” “I support it personally.” So there’s a lot of agreement. I just wanted to point out that there’s another way to look at things. Actually I remembered that on our second class Pei asked a question about why social constructivism is so popular. But my question is a little different from hers. Mine was like, “Are those perspectives integrated together or separate from each other?” I think from the social constructivist view, you can describe something that other perspectives didn’t pay attention to, but I just feel that it still can’t describe all the factors, it just emphasizes some parts. Sometimes I just feel that they ignore other factors. And I am in cognitive psychology, so I felt that I have to say something about it. (Discourse-based Interview, November 20)

Just as Yiping had to contend with alien discourses of her audience (“all of the students in our group seemed to support the social constructivism”), so too did she have to encounter and contend with the alien discourses that were always already present in the topic, that is, the multiple voices that had already been articulated, disputed, elucidated, and evaluated in various ways around the topic by other researchers (e.g., cognitivists, socioconstructivists, etc). Ultimately, Yiping had to position herself among these alien discourses in order to present her own. In the process, Yiping firstly astutely noticed that there is a difference in what socio-constructivists consider most interesting (e.g., they “favor describing how interaction with others or social context influence the individual's language development”) as opposed to cognitivists (who are interested in the “micro part of the cognitive development”). Acknowledging that depending on the level of analysis, a socio constructivist approach sometimes does ignore the inner workings of the mind of the writer, Yiping challenged the prevalent discourse on the topic. Still, Yiping described the difference as a way that a socioconstructivist perspective may subsume all others (or at least, subsume the constructivist perspective), opening up a possibility of the topic to be expanded further.

Engaging the persuasive power of the topic of discourse, Yiping did not assume a common ideological world, but rather an already divided, conflictual, and contested scene

of discursive practices that compelled her to search not just for an ideological center but for the tensions and relationships among the ideologies present in the topic. For Yiping, the topic she studied and wrote about infused her, engaged her, and led her to a productive self-examination (e.g., as a student of cognitive psychology). As hard as it was to engage the given topic as hero, Yiping appreciated the opportunity to crystallize her ideas about the topic that had been forming in the back of her mind by creating this particular utterance for her audience in this CMC activity. In her self-reflective essay, Yiping wrote:

Asynchronous discussion made me feel that I can really express my thought to others (hope it's not an illusion) and made me get a sense of accomplishment after expressing them clearly. But I have to admit, in order to express something clearly, it took me a lot of time to think and compose my responses.

As in the case of Yiping, the speaker's struggle to "achieve a determinate and stable image of the hero is to a considerable extent a struggle with herself" (Bakhtin, 1990, p.6). The following utterance created by Hillary will show more clearly how coming to understand the hero means that the speaker comes to understand the topic in terms of herself and that their relationship is contextualized in terms of their relative positions to one another as well as to the audience.

Date: Thu Nov 14 2002 3:13 pm  
Author: Hillary  
Subject: Dyson's Writing Children

Oh my gosh do I love this article! Thinking of how to create an appreciation for the complexities of being a person in the complex worlds that we belong to is so powerful! I found myself wondering how to go about doing that in my classroom and with the kids I work with. How can we insure that we are engaging them in pathways of negotiation between their responsibilities as interactants in the world. The complexities of what it means to be an adult and what it means to be a child is so interesting. I had never thought about it in such a way, such an interpretative and perhaps reinterpretative way!

The idea that literacy development being situated in the ways with which children participate in culturally valued activities is so true! How many times do I "force" children to follow my lead to the "traditional" way, the accepted way, the way that leads them to MY answers. They are able to adopt

the worlds that they are a part of, to adopt their social voice in the given situation.

It is interesting to see how we, as teachers and researchers, have become interested in the social milieu of children where once it was totally individual. As I was reading about Volosinov I kept thinking about the relation between the fight over methods for "good" teaching in a classroom. What I mean to say is that it seems that some are consistently looking for a methodological panacea for the problems in education without even looking at the complexities occurring in a classroom, without even assuming there is a teacher variable.

Lastly, if we are to pull apart the linguistic, cognitive and social aspects of literacy development, we must remember the complexities involved in doing so in such a culturally diverse world. It is not just about reflection...or so I think.

I'm on a scattered soap box...I guess that just shows how fast my thoughts were moving as I read this article. I'm interested to see what everyone thought of her! She is a new mentor of mine!

In this particular utterance, Hillary expressed her strong positive response to the article by Dyson ("Oh my gosh do I love this article"), because the topic ("Dyson's Writing Children") this article brought up gave Hillary a chance to reflect on her experiences as a teacher ("I found myself wondering how to go about doing that in my classroom and with the kids I work with... I had never thought about it in such a way, such an interpretative and perhaps reinterpretative way! ... As I was reading about Volosinov I kept thinking about the relation between the fight over methods for "good" teaching in a classroom"). Perhaps more importantly, Hillary was afforded a chance to adopt her own stance toward the topic ("if we are to pull apart the linguistic, cognitive and social aspects of literacy development, we must remember the complexities involved in doing so in such a culturally diverse world").

In an interview, Hillary explained how this particular topic grabbed her heart:

There's something about this article that is tangible to me. I think Rita was in there and actually said something like, "I didn't get this article at all." I was thinking like "How could you not get it? It's so right on." You know, my experiences were coming into the article. I guess part of me was like "Okay I'm gonna lay out everything." That's why it ended up being so long. I'm gonna lay



out everything I'm thinking about this article and hoping that somebody somewhere they're gonna find something they can say about it, because I want to have this in-depth conversation about Dyson because I had all those feelings and thoughts. (Discourse-based Interview, November 20)

For Hillary, "all those feelings and thoughts" about the hero as her "experiences were coming into the article" crucially shaped her discourse and left a trace in all its semantic layers. Most interestingly, as the speaker engaged the hero in a dialogue, the dialogic relationship between the speaker and the hero "complicated its expression and influenced its entire stylistic profile" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 276). In fact, throughout the entire CMC speech activities, Hillary consistently wrote relatively short messages except for this particular utterance, because she believed that shorter comments are easier to comprehend and thus intellectually stimulating. Hillary explained this:

For me, when there's really a long post, my attention wanes sometimes such that it's harder work reading, so the actual intellectual stimulation of it is not there with my attention being so on just comprehending what they say. But a shorter comment, when you get it, you automatically have something to say. You don't have to paraphrase in your head. (Discourse-based Interview, November 20)

Despite her preference for shorter messages, Hillary, in creating this particular utterance, went against her entire stylistic profile and produced an exceptionally long message because she wanted to have an in-depth conversation about the topic: "I'm gonna lay out everything I'm thinking about this article and hoping that somebody somewhere they gonna find something they can say about it, because I want to have this in-depth conversation about Dyson, because I had all those feelings and thoughts."

Hillary's effort to engage the audience as well as herself with the topic proved worthwhile. The process of ideological becoming, the struggle for finding and claiming an orientation toward and relationship to a topic, was spread over the entire group. Notably, Rita and Vivien responded to Hillary's engagement with the topic as hero with the following positive comments:

Date: Fri Nov 15 2002 9:53 am  
Author: Rita

Subject: Re: Dyson's Writing Children

Hillary,

It's interesting, of the 3 articles for this week, the Dyson article was my least favorite. However, you raised such interesting points, that I'm now viewing the article in a totally different light. Your enthusiasm must be contagious!

I must admit I felt a bit lost while reading the article. But the minute Sammy was brought into the picture, I became much more engaged. His individual responses and reactions to literacy and group dynamics were quite remarkable. Your comment about teachers forcing students to the traditional, right answers is completely on-target....

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Date: Fri Nov 15 2002 11:02 am

Author: Vivien

Subject: Re: Dyson's Writing Children

... Like Hillary, I found this article full of so many intriguing ideas. I really think I would benefit from reading this article again and again. I have several favorite passages, but the shortest one is, "As Bakhtin (1981) explained, words do not come from dictionaries; they come from 'other peoples' mouths, in other people's contexts'" (page 8) Yeah, OPC!

Hillary's point about the social milieu of children was strong for me too. I was struck by Dyson's ability to drive home the contrast between the autonomous text and the construction of meaning. And I liked the way her article was organized with the subheadings, "Tightly framed visions" and "Wider, deeper perspectives." These seemed to help the reader maintain a sense of understanding and perspective--at least this reader.

In a discourse-based interview, Rita commented on the transformative power of engaging the topic as hero when Hillary helped her to do so:

I was really happy to read her message because I hadn't got much out of the article. I didn't find the article that motivating to me. I don't know, probably it's because she worked with young children. Knowing that she does work with children and seeing her response to it, I was really, I was glad to read it. It made me think about the article in a different way. It caused me to reconsider the article and to value it much more than I had during my initial reading. (Discourse-based Interview, November 26)

From Rita's comment, one can see that the dialogic engagement with the topic as hero does not always come easily to every speaker. As in the case of Rita, if a given topic initially has little meaning for the speaker's lives, the speaker may refuse to engage in it.

Fortunately, it was often the case that the speaker rediscovered the meaning of the topic as she was affected by others' engagement with the same topic as hero.

In some cases, however, the speaker's own awareness that any topic is already "overlain with qualifications, open to dispute, charged with value, already enveloped in an obscuring mist – or, on the contrary, by the 'light' of alien words that have already been spoken about it" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 276) was enough to push herself toward a dialogic engagement with the topic. The speaker could entangle or shoot through shared thoughts, points of view, and alien value judgments and accents embedded in a given topic in the process of creating an utterance even though she might not initially get a clear picture of the topic. In the following utterance, the speaker, Pei, although she admitted that she had difficulty in creating a concrete image of the topic as hero, introduced into the other's words on a given topic her own intentions and highlighted the context of those words in her own way.

Date: Thu Nov 14 2002 6:00 pm

Author: Pei

Subject: Re: my evolving response to the chat room article

Speaking of creating the author, I am surely having a tough time creating one for the "chat room" article, at least one that is coherent. Applying Grice's CP – I do believe the authors were saying what they believed to be true. On the other hand, I needed more information about the concerns they raised ("quantity" principle) (e.g., p.693, last sentence of the 1st paragraph – ICT in classrooms is more problematic than we anticipated – what problems were they anticipating); or, if the authors believed the information is plentiful, then I needed them to be more explicit about the relevance of the provided information to their concerns ("relevance" principle). I also wished they had presented their points in a more obvious manner.

From what I can make sense of what the authors are saying, I did like the attempt to use a technology and a format that were familiar to and welcomed by the students to encourage multiple literacy practices: book reading, book discussion, communicating in writing/chatting, not to mention other social psychological interactions/development. I also liked the unsanctioned chatting room where students created their own universe. Along with Minh, I found the students language creative and refreshing. Also agreeing with Rita, I wondered whether on-line chatting would be beneficial to certain subject matters such as science where non-literary devices (e.g., a globe) are usually helpful and sometimes required to promote comprehension. Nevertheless, I found the article inviting. I wanted to know more about the experiences from the students' perspective. I thought some of the authors'

conclusions were premature, given that this was 8th graders first attempt to do school work in their own nitch, (what would the authors say to our, the graduate students, first synchronous discussion!!), given the authors readily available access to the students. I thought the authors took on an endeavor that was well worth the efforts.

In this utterance, Pei wrote a critical response to the “chat room” article that showed her making up her mind about her own participative orientation toward the topic and the authors’ alien discourses about the topic. In the first part of her utterance, Pei challenged the authors’ way of presenting the topic in their article. Using a construct (Grice’s CP) the class had already discussed before, Pei began to unravel factors that prevented her from appropriating the authors’ words. Instead of simply saying “I don’t like the way the authors write their analysis,” Pei stated her opinion in a very subtle way, giving evidence for what she was saying. With the aid of the construct (Grice’s CP), Pei was free to question the “authority” of the authors’ discourse.

Seen from a Bakhtinian perspective, Pei’s utterance was punctuated by an eventual “liberation” of one’s discourse from the “authority of the other’s discourse” (1981, p. 348). However, to claim that one’s discourse is “liberated” from the “authority” of another’s discourse is not to say that the two discourses do not interact or inform one another. One’s discourse is “free” to question the authority of another’s discourse, but one can do so only with its assistance. Rather than objecting to the authors’ words altogether, Pei tried to reestablish a dialogic relationship with the topic in a way that the authors’ discourse about the same topic no longer demanded unconditional allegiance.

Having been liberated from the authority of others’ discourse, Pei’s utterance about the topic began to reverberate with shared thoughts of other group members (“Along with Minho, I found the students language creative and refreshing. Also agreeing with Rita, I wondered whether on-line chatting would be beneficial to certain subject matters...”) and her own complex value judgments (“Nevertheless, I found the article inviting, I thought some of the authors' conclusions were premature... I thought the authors took on an

endeavor that was well worth the efforts”). Pei’s utterance, woven in and out of complex interrelationships, merged with some and recoiled from others.

The last example I wish to introduce here is the one in which Pei’s engagement with the topic as hero made an enormous influence on the life of another’s utterance created in this CMC activity.

Date: Fri Nov 15 2002 12:54 am

Author: Yang

Subject: Re: my evolving response to the chat room article

hi Pei,

I think the "problems" they meant are more related to the pedagogical side. For example, it is hard to evaluate and assess individual student based on the chat-room text because some of the features and culture of the cyberspace talk. The fact that these students didn't seem to apply in the science discussion the critical literacy they advocate also disappointed them. However, the value of incorporating this medium into their teaching is undeniable.

And like you, reading this article also reminded me of our experience in the synchronous written discussion. Many of the features of chat-room talk mentioned in this article were present in our synchronous CMC. While I have had a hard time adjusting to the synchronous discussions, I am impressed by how these students were at ease with the format of on-line talk. I guess that means I will have to "practice" more than my students before I can implement this form of discussion in my class.

For Yang, Pei’s utterance served as an arena in which she could redefine her relationship with the topic as a co-participant in her own utterance, when she initially could not do so on her own. In a discourse-based interview, Yang revealed her pre-determined orientation toward the discourse of published authors and explained how Pei changed the way she looked at the discourse of the authors:

I really liked her view like she was saying directly, “I don’t like this article. The authors should be clearer about this and that.” But for me, when I read an article, if I don’t understand something, my first reaction is usually, “Well, it probably means something that everyone else but me gets.” So I probably won’t question the author, especially because all these articles are picked out by our teacher. I’m sure that she picked good articles. If I read for myself, or if it’s like a journal that’s not as prestigious, I’ll question the author. But here I just thought that maybe the authors had different intended audience, and I was not just as

sophisticated as the audience the article intended for. When Pei challenged the authors, I was kind of surprised. I was like, “Okay I can do that too.” (Discourse-based Interview, November 19)

Inspired by Pei’s discourse that was free to challenge the authors, Yang began to scrutinize the original text again. The speaker who initially conceived of a text in terms of an original intention located at the center of the text began to see the life of the text as occurring along its circumference that is constantly expanding, encompassing new possibilities of meaning.

Particularly remarkable is the way Yang further examined how the position of this chat-room article related to or contrasted with the positions of other texts she had read on her own, trying to reconcile or account for the differences/similarities. In a discourse-based interview, Yang reported that after reading Pei’s response to the chat room article, she searched the web for the authors’ research backgrounds and read another article the same authors had written about the given topic to find the answer for why the authors were ambivalent about the results of their study.

I went online and found a homepage of the authors, and kind of read through the background of the authors and research interests. I read another whole article of the authors and I realized that the authors had published several articles based on one study. And that changed my view. Reading this article, I was like, “Well, chat room is only part of their study, and their major focus is on critical literacy.” So when I saw these problems in our article, I could realize why the authors were a little bit pessimistic. It’s because the students didn’t really exhibit the kind of critical literacy they wanted in the scientific discussion. That’s why they were a little disappointed. (Discourse-based Interview, November 19)

Finally, Yang, after her own search for a better image of the topic as hero, could determine her own participative orientation toward the given topic that was addressed by the authors and then challenged by Pei, renewing the image of the topic on her own, as revealed in her utterance (“I think the “problems” they meant are more related to the pedagogical side... The fact that these students didn’t seem to apply in the science discussion the critical literacy they advocate also disappointed them”).

Yang's growth in the whole process of engaging in the topic was evident. Inspired by Pei's discourse which was free to challenge the authors' discourse, Yang reread the authors' text again with an eye towards locating the source of the authors' ambivalence about the given topic, sought outside resources (another article by the same authors) to get a better insight into the topic, and ultimately created a clearer image of the topic. In her self-reflective essay, Yang wrote about the transformative influence of the dialogic engagement with others' discourses on her ideological becoming:

Being able to (and being forced to, because it is after all a requirement to post messages) talk about every article we read is already a big help for me to check my comprehension of these articles. But what's even better is that I get to know what other people think about these papers. I am excited to see some of my classmates have the same reaction as I do for an article, but I am even more excited to see some of them take a completely different perspective from mine. The authors they create in their readings seem to blend in with the author I create and, as a result, a new author emerges in my mind after the discussion.  
(Discourse-based Interview, November 19)

## **Commentary**

For the speakers (e.g., Yiping, Hillary, and Pei) who perceived the topic as hero in the CMC speech activity, a clearer understanding of their relationships with the topic and a deeper appreciation for the forms of their discourses and their engagement with others' discourses were evident in their utterances. Each speaker's struggle to achieve a determinate, yet constantly shifting, dynamic image of the hero was a struggle with herself as well as with the audience, and within that struggle ideological becoming opened up for the individual speaker. Ideological becoming was not an easy or quick process for some students such as Yiping. It took her much time and energy to find and claim an orientation toward and relationship to a topic. However, the process of ideological becoming that came along with the dialogic engagement with the topic as hero was a contested process with great consequences and great rewards. The students who actively engaged their topics, who sought to affect and be affected by others' discourses, emerged from the process with voices constructed out of and through the

voices of others. Not only did the speakers themselves benefit from the engagement, other students who interacted with these speakers in this CMC context were also greatly rewarded as the process of ideological becoming spread over the entire group. Those students who did not initially see the relevance of the topic to their life experiences or disciplinary interests were affected by the discourses of the speakers who actively engaged in the topic. They came to develop a new understanding of their relationships with the topic, as in the case of Rita, Vivien, and Yang. For a certain student (e.g., Yang), ideological becoming came with a renewed awareness that one is licensed to challenge the published authors' discourse about a given topic. That awareness led the speaker to search for new meanings by examining how the position of a certain text relates to or contrasts with the positions of other texts and may account for the differences/similarities.

### **Addressivity**

Along with the speaker and the topic as hero, addressivity, the quality of turning to someone, was found to be a constitutive feature of the utterance created in the CMC context. Bakhtin (1986) claimed that any utterance always has an addressee (of various sorts, with varying degrees of proximity, concreteness, awareness, and so forth), whose responsive understanding the speaker seeks and surpasses (p. 126). In this study, the students' utterances were pervaded with the responsive understanding of their addressee that in turn influenced the speakers' choice of language vehicles, that is, the style of their utterances. Before presenting the relevant data, I will briefly discuss Bakhtin's notion of addressivity.

From a Bakhtinian perspective, addressivity is inherent in any language. Every utterance is in some way a response to previous utterances. "Each utterance," as Bakhtin (1986) explained, "refuses, affirms, supplements, and relies" on the other (and others') utterances (p. 91). Furthermore, when speaking, the speaker responds not only to what has already been said but to the anticipated future answer-word from the listener. Creating an utterance, then, is a thoroughly responsive act. Responsive understanding is a



fundamental force, one that participates in the formulation of discourse, and it is moreover an active understanding, one that discourse senses as resistance or support enriching the discourse. Bakhtin (1981) explained it in this way:

The speaker's orientation toward the listener is an orientation toward a specific conceptual horizon, toward the specific world of the listener; it introduces totally new elements into his discourse; it is in this way, after all, that various different points of view, conceptual horizons, systems for providing expressive accents, various social "languages" come to interact with one another. The speaker strives to get a reading on his own word, and on his own conceptual system that determines this word, within the alien conceptual system of the understanding receiver; he enters into dialogical relationships with certain aspects of this system. The speaker breaks through the alien conceptual horizon of the listener, constructs his own utterance on alien territory, against his, the listener's apperceptive background. (p. 282)

When speaking, the speaker always takes into account the apperceptive background of the listener's perception of her speech: the extent to which the addressee "is familiar with the situation, whether he has special knowledge of the given cultural area of communication, his views, and convictions, his prejudices (from my viewpoint), his sympathies and antipathies" (1986, p. 95). For Bakhtin, these considerations determine the speaker's choice of a genre for her utterance, her choice of compositional devices, and, finally, her choice of language vehicles, that is, the style of her utterance (p. 96).

From Bakhtin, one can clearly see that addressivity is essential to the construction of an utterance. It serves as co-author of an utterance. Thus, in the CMC speech activities I observed in this study, it became vitally important to understand 1) who counted as the students' audience; 2) to whom were they responding; and 3) what apperceptive backgrounds of the audience were filling the students' utterance with meaning, shaping what they said. An understanding of Bakhtin shows us that this is a significant issue because the interaction among the speaker, the topic, and the audience(s) is a site of struggle with various and conflicting values and beliefs. One's ideological development is dependent upon it.

In what follows, I will discuss how the addressivity worked in the students' CMC utterances. Two strikingly different perceptions of the students' addressed audience

emerged in the study: classmates as friends/allies and classmates as strangers, with many utterances falling between these two extremes. By focusing on these two audience categories, I hope to demonstrate how the students' different addressee (determined mostly by degrees of proximity) and his or her responsive understanding exerted an active influence on the students' utterances.

### **Classmates as Friends/Allies**

When the students, in constructing their utterances, addressed friends with whom they had already established good social and academic relationships even before taking the class, they perceived their addressees as more or less outside the framework of a social hierarchy and social conventions, "without rank" as it were. The speakers and the addressees identified as close friends in this study had been in the same program for an extended time period, had worked on various projects together, and had met on a frequent basis outside the classroom. This close proximity, in turn, gave rise to a certain candor of intimate speech. This was expressed in an apparent desire for the speaker and addressee to merge completely. As Bakhtin (1986) noted, "since speech constraints and conventions have fallen away, one can take a special unofficial, volitional approach to reality" (p. 97).

The following excerpt will show how intimate speech between two close friends (Rita and Vivien) is imbued with a deep confidence in the addressee, in her sympathy, in the sensitivity and goodwill of her responsive understanding.

Date: Fri Nov 15 2002 9:22 am  
Author: Vivien  
Subject: Re: Faigley predicts Moje

Rita,

You're right about FLE and the approaches to language learning that dominate. I ran across an article the other day about problems teachers have in other countries implementing the "communicative competence" method. Because its principles are grounded in American or Western thought, the method doesn't really meet the needs of the other group of people. Wouldn't it be neat if students in our program developed new "methods" that took into account their

culture's ways of constructing meaning? I use the term methods loosely here, but I hope you all know what I mean. Exciting stuff!

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Date: Fri Nov 15 2002 9:57 am  
Author: Rita  
Subject: Re: Faigley predicts Moje

Vivien,

I think it would be amazing if a class could work together to develop new methods that took into account different cultures' ways of constructing meaning. Everyone would learn so much from such an endeavour. It would certainly be advantageous to teachers/professors in the U.S. as so many different cultures make up our classrooms. Hhhmmm, do I see a dissertation topic before us????

Rita

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Date: Fri Nov 15 2002 10:41 am  
Author: Vivien  
Subject: Re: Faigley predicts Moje

Hhhmmm!?!

Here, Rita and Vivien, who were good friends happened to be assigned to the same group (Group 3) in the second asynchronous discussion. In this particular exchange, they were developing their own ideas about how to address the concerns of international students in the FLE program in which both were enrolled. In the first message, Vivien directly responded to Rita's previous message about the problem of FLE program by saying "Rita, You're right about FLE and the approaches to language learning that dominate." In adding her opinion to the topic, Vivien initially included all the group members ("I hope you all know what I mean") because she was aware that everyone else would read her message. In responding to Vivien's message, however, Rita resorted to the more intimate style of talking to her friend ("Hhhmmm, do I see a dissertation topic before us????"). Here "us" exclusively refers to Vivien and herself, FLE doctoral students. Although Rita was aware that there were non-FLE students in her discussion group, she felt that it was a part of the whole discussion about cultural differences the class was addressing. In a discourse-based interview, Rita explained:

Rita: I thought that's interesting when Minho and Vivien were talking about cultural differences. I thought it's really important to talk about that. Vivien and I are really good friends. We've talked a lot about her experiences in living in Korea. I felt it's really interesting to hear the perspectives of Americans who have lived in Korea.

Yoonhee: You talked about the FLE program, and in this group there are non-FLE people here.

Rita: I just kind of trusted that there's Vivien and Minho who are in FLE program. I had actually thought about "Should I bring it up since everyone is not in FLE?" I figured that what I said was clearly part of our discussion because we talked about cultural differences. (Discourse-based Interview, November 26)

Vivien's last utterance ("Hhhmmmm!?!"), written in response to Rita's invitational intimate gesture, was a clear indication of how confidence in her addressee, in the likelihood that she would understand her led the speaker to play with the convention of the language, giving rise to special expressiveness. The utterance created by Vivien ("Hhhmmmm!?!") was made possible because of the speaker's trust in the listener's apperceptive backgrounds.

Yoonhee: This is so funny. Hhhmmm!?! I'm just curious. I know you are a good friend of Rita. But if somebody else had written something, would you have done that?

Vivien: Maybe not. I admit. I was more inclined to do that because she is my friend. (Discourse-based Interview, November 26)

In this atmosphere of profound trust, the speaker could work outside the framework of social conventions. This determined the special expressiveness and candor of her speech.

Let us examine another example in which the speaker identified the addressed listener as close friend and thus the speaker took the liberty of taking on a sarcastic tone of voice in trust of her listener. Note Alicia's subject line ("Hillary are you supposed to be in here??? Jk").

Date: Thu Nov 14 2002 10:09 pm

Author: Hillary

Subject: Re: Author's Theater

I dont think that I am supposed to repond but I just must. Yes, I think it is very effective. many studies have ben done using something currently labeled "Readers Theatre"...the current version of Author's Theatre. Now, there is a

bit of a difference. Reader's Theatre is scripts made from existing books but I don't see why it couldn't be children's own texts! It is powerful to hold children accountable for the meaning in a book. I think it makes the meaning deeper...it's like watching a film of something you read!

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Date: Thu Nov 14 2002 11:44 pm

Author: Alicia

Subject: Hillary are you supposed to be in here??? jk

There are so many aspects of readers theatre that hit great instructional purposes. The readers theater on the outside appears fun and meaningless sometimes. But when you look deeper, it is a powerful tool. I agree, that it gives more depth to your understanding of what you have read.

Hillary and Alicia, both master's students in Language and Literacy, had taken several classes together, had met and conversed very often outside this class, and had identified each other as "good friends." Hillary, who was assigned to Group 3 in the second asynchronous discussion, was "sneaking around" other chatrooms in search for what she wanted to discuss (e.g. Dyson's article). When she found the topic of her interest (Dyson's author's theater) in Group 1's forum, Hillary decided to contribute there. That is how Hillary's utterance ended up in the Group 1 forum in which her close friend, Alicia, was a participant. As Hillary herself confessed in her utterance, it was not quite "the rule" to cross over to a group to which one was not assigned ("I don't think that I am supposed to respond but I just must"). As a way to joke with Hillary's resistance to the rule and at the same time to welcome her friend's pleasantly surprising presence in her group, Alicia had to say something about it. Alicia revealed her close relationship with Hillary by the subject line ("Hillary are you supposed to be in here??? Jk"). Alicia described her thoughts as follows:

When Hillary came into our chat room, I was saying like, "Hillary are you supposed to be here?" and I was thinking about it when I posted it. I was like, "People are gonna think that I'm a really mean person." I said it in a sarcastic tone because I didn't care whether she was there or not. I was joking in there. I know Hillary really well. I felt comfortable saying it like that because Hillary would take it as a joke, not in sense that I really wanted her to get out of here or something. I think it's part of our relationship. Hillary and I know each other, that sarcastic tone we use in our everyday conversation, you know. But I don't think it would work for anybody else. In a sense, you really have to know your reader. I

should have more knowledge of them as a person before I write those things. I kind of could anticipate how she'd be interpreting it. But again, as I said, I didn't know how other people in my group would have interpreted it. (Discourse-based Interview, November 21)

Alicia, who could easily embody Hillary's perception of her speech and thus anticipate Hillary's future-words ("Hillary would take it as a joke"), took the liberty of taking on the sarcastic tone that they used in their everyday conversation. Seen from a Bakhtinian perspective, because Alicia could anticipate how her addressed listener was going to be interpreting her utterance, she acted in accordance with the response she anticipated, so this anticipated response, in turn, exerted an active influence on the speaker's utterance, the sarcastic tone of her subject line. This projection of the listener's responsive understanding into the speaker's utterance was made possible because the speaker knew the addressed listener very well: The speaker had more knowledge of the listener as a person, as Alicia eloquently described in the interview.

Thus far, I have suggested that the intimate speech as discussed in Vivien's utterance and in Alicia's utterance was realized because the speakers perceived their addressed audience as their close friends who could carry on the same kind of speech in their everyday conversation. However, this "classmates as friends/allies" category should include the cases in which the students perceived other students as friends/allies because they shared similar cultural backgrounds, or they were both international students, even though they had not met or interacted before taking this course. Their friendship evolved in the course of engaging in classroom activities embedded in this class.

For example, Seunghee in the second asynchronous discussion persistently addressed Ming, as can be seen in the following utterances. Note that out of three messages Seunghee posted throughout the entire conversation, she directly addressed Ming in two of her messages.

Date: Fri Nov 15 2002 4:44 pm

Author: Seunghee

Subject: Re: Chatting language VS. Writing language

Good point, Ming!

Though mostly my chatting experiences went along with my generations, I am accustomed to the concerns for bad influence of computer-use on children's lang. acquisition. One of these concerns is related to "Orthogrphy". When I was a kid, I had to write with pencils. In the beginning year of school, I practiced a lot to write basic spellings with pencils. By that practice, I could acquire the spelling systems of Korean.

Same things happen when it comes to contracted forms of lang in Korea. If kids are exposed to "chatting" so early, I concern that it will impact on their acquiring right form of spelling systems and Orthograpy. Therefore, I personally think that incorporating computer in lnaguage education should be delayed until the point in which children can reach a maturity in basic lang. use.

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Date: Fri Nov 15 2002 10:55 pm

Author: Seunghee

Subject: Re: Dyson's article

I agree, Ming. What you wrote reminded me of 'convention', certain norms or rules which writers must keep. As you pointed, writing conventions can vary according to social context such as age, culture, education level, etc.. I could find one example of this in my own class as a teacher. I started to teach ESL 3 students at Literacy Center from last month. After 1st day, I asked students to write about our first class. Two students' journals draw my attention in which writing conventions were dinstinct from each other.

One student named as Scilla has been in the US for three years, but not got higher education. She's Mexican. Her writing seemed really authentic, very natural, though it involved some spelling and grammar mistakes. The other girl, named as Do, from Vietnam, graduated from college, her writing seemd grammatically correct, there was no spelling mistakes at all. However, it seemed akward in that she tried to use difficult terms though the topic itself was very simple which seemed resulted from her academic writing habit from college education.

First, I could see this difference might have resulted from their education and secondly, from their culture. Due relatively long stay in the ESL context, Scilar seemed to acquire more authentic way of writing than Do (she's been here for only 2 months).

If writing is a by-product of our culture and certain social contexts, as educators, I think we should be more cautious not to enforce certain way of writing as a determined one.

Sorry not to contribute well in our discussion,

Have a great weekend,

Seunghee.

Seunghye reported in a discourse-based interview that particularly in the second asynchronous discussion, she found it hard to contribute to the discussion because she was not confident about her understanding of the articles for the week. Thus, for Seunghye, it was a challenge to decide whose messages to respond to; she had to choose messages that made her feel vulnerable or less insecure. Seunghye felt Ming would be the best candidate as her addressed audience because she felt close to Ming and thus could anticipate Ming's "gentle" and "polite" future words.

In this class, I personally say hello to Ming. We have something in common. Like, she is a master's student, she is from Taiwan. I'm from Korea. We are international students. It makes sense to me when she writes something. I don't know, maybe because we share similar cultural backgrounds. As I told you before, I am not very confident about my understanding of the articles. So, if an American student asks a question and I respond to it, I'll be afraid that he will ask me back, asking for evidence or something. But I trust that Ming will be gentle and polite even if she challenges my idea. I like her. She is not aggressive. She seems to be very friendly. (Discourse-based Interview, November 22)

With this deep trust she had for her addressed audience, Seunghye could freely bring up the stories in her utterances excerpted above (e.g., "my chatting experiences went along with my generations... I could find one example of this in my own class as a teacher"). Otherwise, Seunghye, feeling vulnerable, might have kept silent throughout the conversation.

Seunghye felt close to Ming not only because they shared similar cultural backgrounds but also because they often sat next to each other in the class and carried on informal conversation during the break. Seunghye developed her perception that Ming is gentle and friendly through social interactions with her in the class, which led Seunghye to address Ming very frequently in the asynchronous discussion. However, for another speaker, Ali, a shared perspective on a given topic was enough to merge him with his addressed audience, Haemi. Even though Ali had virtually no social interactions with Haemi in or outside the class, Ali considered Haemi as a cultural ally because they shared an international student's perspective on a given topic.

Date: Thu Nov 14 2002 11:03 am



Author: Haemi

Subject: Re: Writing as a social activity

I was about to go get some aspirin but couldn't leave this interesting question.

I DEFINITELY think writing is a social activity. As a second language writer of English, I always have to revise my writing at the end if this would fit to the writers of English. I also heard from other international students saying that they thought they had a really good paper turned in to a professor and got feedback from the professor that he/she couldn't understand what they were talking about. On the contrary, they turned in a paper that they thought it was not that good but received good comments from a professor of an English speaker. It could be an issue of how these students dealt with the topic but mainly I think the students' different styles that had been developed and shaped in the different cultures played a significant role when they wrote. Perceptions that they have learned in their own cultures have influenced their cognition of thoughts, but when they write to people from a different culture, their social interaction hasn't been satisfied with the group from a different culture yet. Well, at the end, I believe individual's cognitive and social dimensions will eventually interact. But in the process of getting there, both dimensions take an important role to a product of writing and can't be ignored.

I may not tap on the issue that Nancy is trying to address here. But I had this prompt thought when I saw the question posted. Well, I really should get an aspirin now. I will get back here with my thoughts from the readings.

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Date: Thu Nov 14 2002 1:01 pm

Author: Ali

Subject: Re: Writing as a social activity

Commenting on Haemi's thought, I believe that this is very related to the thread posted. Indeed the community in which one lives influences his or her of writing. This applies on adults as well.

I believe that this has to do with the writing styles that are primarily shaped by the culture. Those styles may in many cases represent the way the people of a certain society think. This way of thinking influences how one writes. In other words, people write the way they write to fit in a certain community. Writing in a different style would make someone an outsider who does not fit the uniform the discourse community designs for members or affiliates.

When Haemi responded to the teacher's prompt that asked if writing is a social activity, she added her own insights into the topic from the perspective of "a second language writer of English." Ali instantly could embody Haemi's words because Ali, as an

international student, had had similar experiences described by Haemi. Ali described this in a discourse-based interview:

Ali: This was a response to Haemi. We shared the same idea because I guess both of us are international students and have the same experience in the States. We were there together.

Yoonhee: So you had to kind of respond to her because you share

Ali: Because I shared with Haemi the same idea and I had the same belief. So you know, I said, that's a good point. This is really important. (Discourse-based Interview, November 25)

Perceiving his addressed listener, Haemi, as a cultural ally who shared the same feelings and experiences, Ali could reveal his perspective on the topic by saying "Writing in a different style would make someone an outsider who does not fit the uniform the discourse community designs for members or affiliates."

In all the examples I presented in the "classmates as friends/allies" category, whether the speaker and the addressed audience were good friends whose apperceptive backgrounds was already known to each other (as in the case of Rita and Vivien, Hillary and Alicia), or had just formed friendships in the course of classroom activities (Seunghye and Ming), or merged together at a "topic" arena as cultural allies (Haemi and Ali), the proximity gave rise to a certain candor of speech, which was expressed in "an apparent desire for the speaker and addressee to merge completely." Because speech constraints and conventions had fallen away, some speakers could take a "special unofficial, volitional approach to reality" (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 97). For others, intimate speech was imbued with a deep confidence in the addressee, in his sympathy, in the sensitivity and goodwill of his responsive understanding. In this atmosphere of profound trust, the speakers could reveal their internal depths.

### **Classmates as Strangers**

When the students had to address classmates with whom they did not have much personal contact in or outside the classroom, they perceived their addressees as strangers. When they perceived their addressees as strangers, the students' struggle to decide for

themselves the level of background knowledge of the listener in addition to “his views and convictions, his prejudices, his sympathies and antipathies” (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 95-96) was projected in their resulting utterances in the choice of language devices. Because the apperceptive backgrounds of their addressed audience were not given to the speakers, the students had to ask themselves such questions as to what extent the listener is familiar with the topic and what his or her position is on it. They also had to weigh the relative social standing of the speaker and listener and the degree of their personal or professional relationship. The example I wish to present in this category was drawn from the second asynchronous discussion.

Date: Fri Nov 15 2002 9:02 am

Author: Hilda

Subject: Re: Moje's marginalized groups and their literacy practices

Although I see the value of examining the "gangstas" form of writing in all its complexity as a way of self-identification, self-expression etc-- I must say that I was a little bit dismayed that the author failed to address the bigger issues surrounding this type of lifestyle. I guess having grown up in an inner-city neighborhood, this article hit close to home for me. The bigger issues involve the violence, lack of positive role modeling, and lack of guidance in their lives. It was hard for me personally to see beyond this and I kept wanting to know more about how schools could use these students' strengths to help them lead a more productive, healthy way of life.

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Date: Fri Nov 15 2002 9:43 am

Author: Kelly

Subject: Re: Moje's marginalized groups and their literacy practices

I don't know if that was the intent of the author-to try and "fix" or help the kids. It was more about trying to uncover this different literacy. I have NOT experienced this community first-hand, Hilda - so I do not have the background knowledge that you do. i really appreciate your input.

I think your concerns really speak to why this type of language ( the gangsta writing) stays as "otherized". It's clearly not because it lacks depth, creative construction or because it is not smart. I think its because of how it is situated. It's scary and seems dangerous. But is the language really scary-or just what's behind the language? Can we seperate the two? Is valuing it supporting the lifestyle? Big Issues.

I know that I sound very positive about this writing.. but I would be very nervous about how to handle it the right way in the classroom.

When Hilda wrote a rather emotional response to Moje's article by saying "I was a little bit dismayed that the author failed to address the bigger issues surrounding this type of lifestyle," Kelly was aware that she was not entirely agreeing with Hilda's words. At the same time, Kelly did not know much about Hilda's views and convictions, her prejudices, her sympathies and antipathies about the given topic except for the information revealed in Hilda's utterance ("having grown up in an inner-city neighborhood, this article hit close to home for me..."). Now, for Kelly, Hilda's utterance to whom she was responding (she objected to Hilda's view on the given topic even though she valued Hilda's input) was already at hand, but Hilda's future response (or responsive understanding) was still forthcoming. So Kelly, constructing her utterance, tried actively to determine this response. For Kelly, it was a daunting job to determine Hilda's future-words, especially because the proximity between the speaker and the listener was distant, given that their social interactions in and outside the classroom were very minimal to the extent that they had not talked to each other at all in class. Therefore, Kelly made an extra effort to convey her message clearly and at the same time not to offend Hilda. Kelly made it sound as if she were not sure about the topic ("I don't know if that was the intent of the author-to try and "fix" or help the kids"), and hastened to point out that she could not express her opinion from first-hand experiences like Hilda had and that she valued Hilda's input ("I have NOT experienced this community first-hand, Hilda - so I do not have the background knowledge that you do. i really appreciate your input"). In elaborating her own view on the topic, Kelly then linked Hilda's concerns to what she was thinking about the topic ("I think your concerns really speak to why this type of language ( the gangsta writing) stays as 'otherized'"). In closing her utterance, Kelly made a reservation for her positive words ("I know that I sound very positive about this writing.. but I would be very nervous about how to handle it the right way in the classroom").

In a discourse-based interview, Kelly explained all these complexities involved in determining her listener's responsive understanding and making her utterance in accordance with that future response.

I was really responding to Hilda's comment because she was really concerned with improving their lifestyles. She was really concerned that the article didn't address, you know, how. The scary thing is that first of all, I don't think it's the author's intention to fix and help the kids. Then I try to say, but I haven't lived, she sounds like she came from the world where this is part of her experiences. So I really tried to really clearly say, "Because I haven't experienced this community, I don't have the background knowledge like you have." And then I just kind of went to talk about it in a more separate way how language is not privileged and valued, that's why what's scary. I think that's really a hard decision for educators. I wanted to make, when I wrote this, I tried to be really careful in saying "I totally value your perspective because I don't have that." I don't want her to say, "Oh you know, of course, I knew that the author wasn't trying to fix the kids." I tried to really clearly say that because I didn't want to offend her. (Discourse-based Interview, November 21)

From Kelly's comment, one can see that an utterance is directed toward an answer and cannot escape the profound influence of the answering word that it anticipates (as evidenced in Kelly's statement: "I don't want her to say, 'oh you know, of course, I knew that the author wasn't trying to fix the kids'"). Kelly had to be very careful not invoke such negative future words from Hilda.

Here, the speaker's challenge in determining the listener's future words and acting in accordance with them was multiplied because the speaker did not know the listener as a person – her convictions, beliefs, sympathies, and antipathies. The lack of personal contact and social interactions between the speaker and the listener often made the speaker perceive her addressed audience as strangers. The fact that this class was composed of students from various programs and most of them (except for students in the same program) had no prior interaction with each other made it hard for some students to embody immediately each other's words in their utterances. For example, one student, Mary, commented on the challenge in determining her audience's backgrounds and responding to the listener's future words when she did not know the people very well:

The thing is that there is so much explanation that is necessary sometimes when you don't know the people. For example, if I listen to a friend of mine saying

something in the class, I already know that person, I know where they are coming from, I know their sort of philosophies on how to look at things, I know what their experiences are. Even at that moment, I am thinking, “Oh she is teaching second grades, so she must be thinking about this.” I trust what she is saying because I know she knows this from another class we are in. So, if you don’t know the person very well, like most of the people in this class, it’s much harder to get a lot out of the statement they make because there’s so much missing from that idea. (Discourse-based Interview, November 20)

### **“The Others” in the Group**

Thus far, I have attempted to show how the (direct) addressee’s convictions, views, prejudices, and sympathies and antipathies and the speaker’s relative position were reflected in a special way in the students’ utterances in CMC. When the students perceived their addressed audience as friends/allies, they could easily embody the addressed audience’s responses, and thus their resulting utterances showed a candor of intimate speech, expressed in a merging of conceptual horizons between the speaker and the listener. On the other hand, when the students perceived their addressed audience as strangers, they strove to get a reading on the addressee’s words, and on his or her alien conceptual system that determined the words, entering into dialogical relationships with certain aspects of this alien system. Whether the students in this study perceived their addressed audience as close or distant, however, the CMC context in which the students wrote their messages for the entire group (including the teacher) to share in a “public” space forced the students to deal with more profound audience heteroglossia. Even when they addressed a particular person in their messages, they were aware of the future-words of the others in the group. Recall that even in an almost “private” conversation between the two good friends Rita and Vivien I presented in the “Classmates as Friends/Allies” category, the interactants showed an awareness of the big “others” in the group, still anchoring their conversation into what the whole class was discussing: “I figured that what I said was clearly part of our discussion because we talked about cultural differences” (Rita, Discourse-based Interview, November 26).

In this CMC context in which expectations and needs of a group of real audience as well as of one individual addressed audience need to be accommodated, the students' struggle in accounting for all the people in the group and anticipating their collective responsive reactions became frequently multifaceted processes that introduced unique internal dramatism into the utterance. The speaker had to break through the familiar or alien conceptual horizon of the listeners (both the direct addressee and the big others), constructing his or her own utterance against the listeners' apperceptive background by continuing to pose questions such as to what extent that group of people was familiar with the subject and context of his or her utterance, and what their position on it would be. Also of particular importance were the relative social standings of the speaker and listeners and the degree of their personal or professional relationships.

### **Speech Genres**

Thus far, I have discussed three components of an utterance (i.e., the speaker, the topic as hero, and addressivity), suggesting that the speaker's ideological struggle in constructing an utterance is a struggle with others' words, including one's own, and with the meanings, values, and intentions that others have already invested, and may in the future invest, in the topic being discussed. Now, I wish to add one more component, speech genres as resources, to the life of utterances created in the asynchronous CMC speech activity. A brief discussion of the concept of speech genres as set forth by Bakhtin and by functional linguists will help illuminate my analysis of speech genres as an integral part of an utterance in the CMC context.

A functional semiotic concept of genre proposed in a semiotic theory of text (Fairclough, 1989; Halliday, 1978; Kress, 1987; Lemke, 1995) recognizes that every text is more likely to include some of the resources of the language than others because it is situated: it is about some topics rather than others, it constructs or acknowledges some relationships between writer and reader rather than others, some attitudes of writer toward text context, and it is organized "appropriately" for some medium of

communication. In so far as these features are common throughout the text, they are defined as a “linguistic register” (Halliday, 1978) that characterizes the text. Initially, semiotic study found large distinctions in the elements of register. But as semiotic linguists become more specific about each of these features, they realized that texts of any length are semantically fragmented: they shift topics, they take different stances toward readers and content at different points, they may adapt differently to their medium, and use different strategies of organization. Therefore the concept of genre makes better sense in that it recognizes both repeatable types of texts and the heteroglossic nature of meaning-making processes contested in a single text.

In line with the social semiotic view of text, Bakhtin conceptualized an utterance as incorporating both primary and secondary genres. Bakhtin’s lifetime commitment to affirming and investigating the rejoinders of discourse in life and discourse in art has given us a broad, inclusive, and richly articulated theoretical basis for inquiring into speech genres as an integral part of an utterance. Speech genres, Bakhtin (1986) stated, should:

include rejoinders of daily dialogue (and these are extremely varied depending on the subject matter, situation, and participants), everyday narration, writing (in all its various forms), the brief standard military command, the elaborate and detailed order, the fairly variegated repertoire of business documents (for the most part standard), and the diverse world of commentary (in the broad sense of the world: social, political). And we must also include here the diverse forms of scientific statements and all literary genres (from the proverb to the multivolume novel. (p. 62)

Bakhtin went on from this promising beginning to offer one useful way to begin to distinguish among these genres without making hierarchical distinctions among them. He wrote,

Secondary (complex) speech genres – novels, dramas, all kinds of scientific research, major genres of commentary, and so forth – arise in more complex and comparatively highly developed and organized cultural communication (primarily written) that is artistic, scientific, sociopolitical, and so on. During the process of their formation, they absorb and digest various primary (simple) genres that have taken form in unmediated speech communion. These primary genres are altered and assume a special character when they enter into complex ones. (p. 62)



Bakhtin's link between primary and secondary speech genres assures us that the students who participated in CMC activities came to the class with some repertoire of everyday genres they could produce, probably with a larger repertoire of everyday genres they recognized. For the students, their individual utterances could serve as an arena in which the everyday discursive knowledge intersected with the written genres of academic, artistic, and scientific communication they developed. With this Bakhtinian view of speech genres along with the social semiotic view of text, I examined how speech genres constituted an integral part of the students' utterances in CMC activities. Now, I will discuss how the students created an utterance through their use of primary and secondary speech genres, focusing on what motivated the students to use certain speech genres in the construction of their utterances.

To give the reader an initial sense of how genres were an integral part of an utterance in CMC, I wish to present the simplest forms of utterances created in the CMC context. The following segments were drawn from the Group 3 forum in the second asynchronous discussion in which the teacher and the students had agreed to make an initial post before getting started with the actual text-based discussion to make sure that access was not a problem.

#1

Date: Wed Nov 13 2002 8:52 am

Author: Nancy

Subject: Bonjour!

Couldn't help myself. The weather is just like the weather in late August, mid-September when I was a little girl in Montreal!  
Let's see. By way of introduction, see if you can think of a turn of phrase or particular word that characterizes your own typical oral speech. For me, one I can think of just now is that I often say, "Actually, ..." as a way to qualify or extend or object. We'll see if I use it in this our last written discussion!

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#2

Date: Wed Nov 13 2002 12:17 pm

Author: Rubin

Subject: Re: Bonjour!

Hi. You may be reminded of this weather all you like; personally, I've moved continually farther south NOT to be reminded of such weather. Perhaps I have two phrases that are characteristic. I tend to answer direct questions by saying "No, and yes." (Drives my teenage son up the wall.) The other is the ancient orator's memory trick, "In the first place...second place..., etc."

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#3

Date: Wed Nov 13 2002 1:31 pm

Author: Vivien

Subject: Re: Bonjour!

Hi everyone! Being from Louisiana, this low-humidity weather is wonderful to me!! One of the phrases I seem to say a lot is, "So what I'm trying to say is..." I'm not sure what that says about me, except maybe I often feel like I don't express myself clearly.

Until tomorrow,

Vivien

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#4

Date: Wed Nov 13 2002 3:25 pm

Author: Yujin

Subject: Re: Bonjour!

Hi all, I am also enjoying this beautiful weather outside. I guess the phrases I use a lot are "First of all, I wanna say..." , "I want to talk about two things. First...., Second, ...", or "I have two questions". It seems that I tend to make sure how many points I want to say. I am looking forward to seeing you here tomorrow.

Yujin

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#5

Date: Wed Nov 13 2002 9:13 pm

Author: Hillary

Subject: Re: Bonjour!

I think my saying is, "I dont wanna." or "Geez em". And as for the weather...my little dog Mouse thinks it is divine. She gets to wear her tshirt and strut her fur coat without being hot! Me? I just want Christmas to get here. I saw tree huts going up yesterday! Yeah!

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#6

Date: Wed Nov 13 2002 9:36 pm

Author: Rita

Subject: Re: Bonjour!

Hello everyone!

I'd have to say that one of my most common expressions starts with; "What exactly ...". As in, What exactly does a dog named Mouse look like while strutting around in a t-shirt???? It must be a cute sight to see!

Talk to you soon,  
Rita

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#7

Date: Wed Nov 13 2002 10:16 pm  
Author: Minho  
Subject: Re: Bonjour!

Sorry for being late. I almost forgot it was Wednesday. Time flies like an arrow. What a coincidence! I mean this morning I thought about time is flying and now I have to say this again right now.

Regarding a turn of phrase or particular word that characterizes my own typical oral speech, I think "I would like to say..." or "So, you mean.... and/ but I believe..."

Now I have to get to the articles for tomorrow's discussion. See you all tomorrow and have a good night.

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#8

Date: Wed Nov 13 2002 11:04 pm  
Author: Yang  
Subject: Re: Bonjour!

hi everyone,

The timing of this on-line discussion couldn't be better. I am just recovering from laryngitis and still have a hard time speaking. As for the words I use frequently, I think I say "really?" and "ok" a lot, whether I am speaking Chinese or English.

Talk to you soon!

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#9

Date: Thu Nov 14 2002 9:10 am  
Author: Pei  
Subject: Re: Bonjour!

I am checking in.

In the first utterance (#1), Nancy wanted the students to say hello to each other in the group. As a way to make them get to know each other, she asked the students to comment on a phrase that was characteristic for them, because she felt "it was a nice way

to get them to talk about themselves,” and to fulfill her big purpose which is to “in psycholinguistics people are aware of their own language use.” In response to Nancy’s utterance that organized like personal notes or conversational turns, the students began making their own statements about themselves. In these initial utterances, each of the students used different structures to respond. Rubin (#2), Vivien (#3), and Yujin (#4) all entered with “hi”, and talked about the weather first before listing the phrases that were characteristic for them. Vivien in particular closed her utterance with a highly formulaic convention that was unusual for the CMC medium (“Until tomorrow, Vivien”). Yujin also closed her utterance with the signature of her name, a typical closing convention in an e-mail exchange. Hillary listed her phrases, and then connected the weather with something about her little dog and herself. Hillary’s utterance lacked such conventions. Rita came in with “Hello, everyone,” a typical opening convention, and then listed her common expression, building it right into Hillary’s statement about her little dog. She completed her utterance with closing conventions (“Talk to you soon, Rita”). Minho, who came late at night, declared his presence in his “sorry for being late” apology statement before he shared his phrases. He closed his utterance with conversational speech act (“See you all tomorrow and have a good night”). Yang checked in with her “hi, everyone” greeting and then narrated her physical conditions. After listing some of her phrases, she closed her utterance with “Talk to you soon” convention. Pei declared her presence simply by stating, “I am checking in.” For Pei, this short statement was enough to let the group members know that she was present.

Although all these initial utterances were encouraged by the teacher’s conviction that “You can’t just start. You have to say hello” and her explicit invitation to check in and make statements about themselves, the students used different structures in declaring their presence, drawing on the genres of letters, personal e-mail exchanges, personal notes, or conversational turns, and adopting all or only certain aspects of the genres to serve their own communicative purposes. Despite the difference in structuring their utterances, however, almost all of the students in this group entered the Blackboard with statements about themselves. Looking at the phenomena from a Bakhtinian perspective,

the students wished to declare their presence by providing information about their hometown, teenage son, dog, physical condition, etc., as well as a descriptive listing of their phrases elicited from the teacher. Having introduced themselves to the group, the students then entered into the discussion.

As the text-based discussion got started, the students often combined primary genres with secondary when they posted their utterances that, for example, brought declarative statements in conjunction with questions. In addition, the students used the descriptive genres to support an interpretive statement, indicating an increase in the complexity of speech genres. Let us look at the first content-based response created by Vivien in direct response to Nancy's first question.

Date: Thu Nov 14 2002 8:57 am  
Author: Nancy  
Subject: Faigley predicts Moje

We could talk about any topic you would like, of course, but just to get us started, I'd like to know if you think that Faigley, writing in 1986 about a "social view" of writing, would have predicted what Moje is reporting in 2000. Is her article squarely in a social view? What do you think?

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Date: Thu Nov 14 2002 2:08 pm  
Author: Vivien  
Subject: Re: Faigley predicts Moje

In thinking how Faigley discusses the social view of writing, I think it is reasonable to predict the Moje article. The mere nature of being a member of a group is in line with how Faigley describes the social view--writing can only be understood from the perspective of the group (society), rather than the individual. What is important about Moje's article to me is the group membership these young people so desired. It is also interesting that they chose this medium in which to express themselves or "to write themselves into the world." (page 652)

What I found completely fascinating was how these young people chose to create and take part in elaborate and high-developed literacy practices yet were seen as unsuccessful by school standards. The combination of their high levels of metalinguistic awareness and their poor performance in school is also tied into the social view of writing. It's like traditional school settings seem to take the individual out of their situation and expect them to be empty vessels.

The Moje article also makes me think of the articles about the differences between home language and school language. Bruner and Hammer seemed to place more value on home language in the language acquisition process. But as children get older, it's school language (or what happens at school) that gets valued. Like these gangsta adolescents, their "home" language was not valued. But Moje, I believe, wants to highlight the complexity of their literacy practices.

A further comparison I feel inclined to make is to our articles on reading and the pull of the text (Schallert and Ivey). It's not that young people are not interested in reading or learning. It's just that they are not interesting in reading or learning what we as teachers tell them to read. I'm thinking about a teenage boy I know who is a whiz at computer related things, but struggles with the "simplest" concepts in high school. But, what is the solution?

At one glance, one might posit that the predominant structure for this utterance was argument. However, a closer examination revealed that this utterance was created in a complex interplay of various speech genres that the speaker could employ from her personal repertoire of speech genres learned through experience and that the speaker could create in a new medium of CMC to best respond to the speaker's purpose, topic, audience, and medium. Vivien, who was "compelled" to address the teacher's question because she figured the teacher chose the articles and she had asked her question for a reason, started her utterance by stating her position about the question ("In thinking how Faigley discusses the social view of writing, I think it is reasonable to predict the Moje article"), and then provided a reason for her stated position. When Vivien had done a job of answering the teacher's question, she began to connect the given article to her personal interests ("What is important about Moje's article to me ... What I found completely fascinating was..."). She then attempted evaluative interpretation by making a comparison between the given article and other readings the class had discussed before, probing similarities and differences ("Bruner and Hammer seemed to place more value on home language in the language acquisition process... A further comparison I feel inclined to make is to our articles on reading and the pull of the text (Schallert and Ivey)"). The "research" genre led her to pose a real-life question at the end ("I'm thinking about a teenage boy I know who is a whiz at computer related things, but struggles

with the "simplest" concepts in high school. But, what is the solution?"). The question, evolved from the complex interplay of primary genres and secondary genres, was meant to elicit response from other students and connection with other students. In her contribution, by posing a question with her real-life example about a teenage computer whiz, Vivien could successfully invite other students to share their personal opinions or experiences on this particular topic thus utilizing the question form in an invitational utterance. This kind of invitation was very crucial in this CMC activity because by appealing to others, the speaker was inviting others to take over the conversational floor, and thus facilitate turn-taking. Seen from a Bakhtinian perspective, Vivien desired to produce an utterance that would move the topic on in a way that took account of what preceded (Nancy's question) and created curiosity for what might follow (a teenage computer whiz), that is, that contained the combination of familiarity and unpredictability typical of "contingent interaction." Vivien's utterance, comprising as it did all three of Halliday's (1978) primary language functions (a textual link, an ideational body, and an interpersonal close), met with immediate response by several students in the group.

As a contrast to Vivien's argument structure that invited others to contribute, I wish to present another utterance created in response to the same prompt by Nancy that also successfully invited others to take over the conversational floor, using a different structure from Vivien's.

Date: Thu Nov 14 2002 8:57 am  
Author: Nancy  
Subject: Faigley predicts Moje

We could talk about any topic you would like, of course, but just to get us started, I'd like to know if you think that Faigley, writing in 1986 about a "social view" of writing, would have predicted what Moje is reporting in 2000. Is her article squarely in a social view? What do you think?

---

Date: Thu Nov 14 2002 9:09 am  
Author: Rita  
Subject: my evolving response to the chat room article

Buon giorno tutti!

First of all, I must begin with my confession that I'm torn between which article to write about first. I loved the gangsta article. And although I didn't love the chat room article, my evolving response to it is vying for my attention.

I was sold on the use of chat rooms in language arts programs. It seemed like a good idea to me notwithstanding some of the disadvantages that the authors reported. And suddenly when they moved on to chat rooms in Science, I was incredulous, doubtful that it could ever work. Why did I immediately shift allegiances? Why do I hold science (and math) in such a mysterious, fearful regard that I thought it was inappropriate to have informal chat room discussions about such lofty, sacred, impenetrable subjects? Certainly you have to have a teacher to transmit the mystery. Certainly students couldn't construct meaning on their own. Then suddenly, a few paragraphs into the discussion, I was liberated by the idea of science in a chat room - - - informal language like 'tis is the moon" interrupted by brb (bathroom breaks) - - - it all sounded so novel and appealing to me! Of course, the authors did express concerns that the use of chat rooms didn't encourage the students to change their positions towards scientific authority. But, at least it's a start. One that's very over-due!

Many of you may not have the math/science phobias that haunt me. In which case, the above thoughts will have no meaning!

As for Dr. Green's question about the Moje article, I will think about it throughout the day and respond when I'm once again before a computer.

Good day!  
Rita

This utterance created by Rita took the form of an informal (e-mail) letter or personal note with its characteristic opening and closing conventions. Rita's frequent use of this genre in constructing her utterance in the CMC activities can be in part attributed to her perception of CMC discussion. She perceived the asynchronous CMC to be very informal:

I was being more informal here because I think it's a combination of fun and intellectual work. Academic but not just purely academic. I did really think that other people gave much more academic responses than I did. I was a little bit informal. Everyone's response was more academic, not as informal as me. I felt mine was kind of light-hearted. (Discourse-based Interview, November 26)

Not only her own perception of CMC as informal conversation, but also the fact that Rita was the first person to post a text-based response in the group (besides the



teacher's prompt) made her create a genre of her own that would best serve her purpose at the time. In her utterance, Rita wanted to talk about the chat room article, which had nothing to do with the teacher's prompt. Faced with the conflict between her wanting to say something that she desired to share with other people and her wanting not to ignore totally the teacher's question, she used a "confession" genre to let the teacher and the students know that although she was torn between which article to write about first, the chat room article was vying for her attention. In this way, Rita gave herself permission to move the conversation on in a direction that she wanted, at the same time making a textual link to the teacher's prompt. Her response to the chat room article then perpetuated descriptive narration ("I was sold on the use of chat rooms.. I was incredulous, doubtful... I was liberated by the idea...") coupled with self-reflective questions directed to herself ("Why did I immediately shift allegiances? What do I hold science (and math) in such a mysterious...?"). She then came back to the evaluation of the article ("The authors did express concerns that the use of chat rooms didn't encourage the students to change their positions towards scientific authority. But, at least it's a start. One that's very over-due!").

Of particular interest is the way Rita then turned on her intimate private speech genre that is meant to elicit sympathy from the group members ("Many of you may not have the math/science phobias that haunt me. In which case, the above thoughts will have no meaning!"). This kind of speech genre was effective in this speech activity in inviting other students to share their personal experiences on a particular topic, thus utilizing the conversational form in an invitational utterance. In fact, Rita's use of the conversational speech genre met with immediate enthusiastic response by several students (e.g., "I share the math/science phobia of Rita so I am somehow impressed with what the students did with the science topic"). Rita, in closing her utterance, did not forget to mention that she would come back with an answer to the teacher's question. She even named the author of this message ("As for Dr. Green's question about the Moje article, I will think about it throughout the

day...”) because she was aware that the teacher would read her message. She logged out with her characteristic “Good day, Rita” convention.

From Rita’s utterance, I want to highlight the observation that even in an overarching informal letter-style utterance, confession, narration, description, self-reflection, and interpretation were all fused together to meet successfully the moment-by-moment demands the speaker faced in taking into account the purpose, topic, audience, and medium of her utterance. I also want to emphasize that because Rita perceived the CMC discussion as informal, she chose an informal letter form as an overarching super-structure of her utterance.

As a further comparison in the students’ choice of speech genres, I wish to present an utterance created by Stacy who, unlike Rita, perceived CMC discussion as formal and academic, because of its written nature. Stacy described her perception of CMC as follows:

In this asynchronous CMC, I’m kind of obsessed with, I re-read it millions of times. I re-worded millions of times. Even here I guess I spent a lot of time writing my comments, thinking about them. But I got on a couple times just to read everyone, didn’t respond to anything, and then went back, looked at my articles again, and came back on. So maybe it takes me longer than other people. But I also, this is probably just me not wanting to look stupid if I just write. Maybe a lot of other people don’t have that issue. (Discourse-based Interview, 25)

With her obsession with sounding “correct” and “smart” in written conversation, the predominant structure for Stacy’s utterance was a complex argument.

Date: Fri Nov 15 2002 11:14 pm  
Author: Stacy  
Subject: Re: Is it writing when it's chatting?

I agree that the emoticons available in chatting do serve the purpose of helping to express attitudes and/or moods. For example, sarcasm or humor is often misinterpreted in written communication. These emoticons allow the authors a quick and easy way to indicate these emotional intents.

However, I think that skilled writers are also able to do this, just with words. Perhaps this is mainly with longer prose, that wouldn't normally be expressed in a chatting situation. Nonetheless, these sentiments can still be

adequately expressed with words! Otherwise, we wouldn't have the classics that make us laugh, cry, ... :-)

In a way, perhaps this short hand way of expressing emotion has taken responsibility off the writer to be skilled with words?

In this utterance, Stacy wanted to make a point that even though emoticons may convey one's attitudes or moods, they still can not replace words in more formal writing. Her claim was being weighed against other students' previous messages that stated they often wished they could use emoticons in their academic papers as well as chatting. In her discourse-based interview, Stacy stated her response to other students' positions on the use of emoticons:

Someone said they can foresee this [the use of emoticons] going over into the academic writing. Oh gee, I hope not, because I think it's nice to see that academic writing. ... I agree that it's a nice way to communicate in this format. I enjoy reading that stuff. But I hope that this type of writing doesn't maybe decrease the other type of writing, so I was just trying to express that opinion. (Discourse-based Interview, November 25)

To express her opinion stated as such, Stacy first felt it important to start with a common ground with other students. After initially agreeing with other students who wrote that emoticons can express one's attitudes and supporting their position by taking an example as to how emoticons can be an easy way to express the authors' emotional intents, Stacy then proceeded with her own position statement ("However, I think that skilled writers are also able to do this, just with words"), justifying her position with evidence ("Otherwise, we wouldn't have the classics that make us laugh, cry..."). Truly remarkable is the way she then inserted a smily face (":-)"), after making a rather strong position statement, showing how the speaker was actively responding to this particular communicative context. Stacy was aware that she was engaged in a larger event than just an argument, and so started using resources (emoticons) available in this new communication medium even when she was arguing against this use in an academic setting.

I wrote all this and then I was trying to be funny and included a smily face. I don't know if anybody got it. (Discourse-based Interview, November 25)

Stacey was also aware that in this medium, the intention of the argument was “exploration,” not “victory.” She was using the device (“:-)”) as a way not only to soften her argument, but also connect with other students. Her desire to invite other students to explore the topic further was manifested in her last sentence (“In a way, perhaps this short hand way of expressing emotion has taken responsibility off the writer to be skilled with words?”). Instead of making a statement, she put a question mark to make her argument tentative as well as to appeal to other members to continue the discussion.

Other students also utilized questioning for another reason besides softening otherwise strong statements. They were testing a hypothesis that used a complex argument. Let us look at the following utterance created by Seunghee.

Date: Fri Oct 4 2002 1:14 pm  
Author: Seunghee  
Subject: Re: Common theme

Good point, Vivien. I agree on that "RESPECT" is a common theme underlying dialogic classroom. And, also it reminds me of Vygotsky's "the zone of proximal development" which i encountered while reading one of the basic readings. (James v. Wertsch) I think that alongside with "RESPECT", the belief in potential development in problem-solving in collaboration with peers is one of the underlying tone of this week's readings.

What do you guys think of that?

This utterance is of particular interest to me because Seunghee, who had consistently avoided taking up content-based questions or queries in the discussion, presented her own conceptual interpretation about the readings for the week. Like Stacy, Seunghee started her utterance first by agreeing with other students, Vivien who had first initiated the genre of conceptual abstraction. Then she attempted her own abstracting about the readings. Finally, she was testing her ideas against others by asking a question (“What do you guys think of that?”). Seunghee described the process of structuring her utterance as follows:

Even though I said I was agreeing with Vivien at the beginning, I didn't really agree with her. I felt her point about respect as an underlying theme of the readings was a little too ideal, or a little too abstract. But, you know, I was not really confident about my own understanding of the readings, so I didn't want to debate with her. So my strategy was to evaluate her idea positively and then present my idea as a kind of add-on. Honestly, I encountered Vygotsky's idea about ZPD for the first time in this class, so I didn't know much about the concept. When I presented the idea to the other students in the group, I wanted to test if my conceptualization is kind of correct. (Discourse-based Interview, October 16)

Seunghhee was not asking the question without an agenda, she had a hypothesis she wanted to test on the other students. However, she did not assert her position in opposition to others as in the debate genre but asked a leading question to see if her hypothesis was tenable from other's responses. Truly remarkable about Seunghhee's utterance was the fact that as Seunghhee read and analyzed other students' messages, she became aware of the content and qualities of written communication as well as the appropriate speech genres that contributed to powerful information and dialogue, and she tried to emulate these qualities in her own utterance.

### **Commentary**

The students' utterances showed a vast range of speech genres. Clearly, different motivations generated different ways of using genres and communicating through them. When the students were faced with a specific communicative situation, viewed in terms of purpose, audience, and medium, they responded in ways consistent with their personal repertoire of genres learned through experience, at the same time utilizing genre features that were being created in a new medium of CMC.

Notably, during the CMC discussion, the students brought various initial genres into the discussion. When the students made their positing on task, they used the genres of defining, narrating, abstracting, interpreting, evaluating, eliciting, and testing. These genres, each with its own purpose, were often fused together in a single utterance. As the students drew on their repertoire of speech genres, putting forth activities that they hoped would direct the discussion, they negotiated the activity of the discussion, developing and

adapting the speech activities for increasingly complex purposes as the discussion progressed.

My observation from the students' utterances which used an argument or an informal letter as an overarching super-structure was that even in a single utterance, the speech genres generally moved from cooperative to competitive ones. When the students entered the discussion with their initial statements, the most productive genre was the narrating of memories/experiences that had a connection with several students or an appreciative response/agreement to a previous message. This finding indicates that the students desired to find common ground, to make connections initially. The shift to the competitive genres of interpretation and argumentation occurred after the cooperative genres had run their course in an utterance. I posit that because the cooperative genres were used before the competitive genres, the intention of the interpretation and argumentation was "exploration," not "victory."

### **Reciprocal Simultaneity of the Four Components in an Utterance**

As a way to integrate the heretofore-elaborated four components of an utterance in conjunction with the CMC discursive practice embedded in this particular sociocultural context, I will present the very first example of Pei's utterance I discussed in the category of "Speaker." Here, I attempt to show how one's utterance is both constrained and enabled by who she is as she speaks relative to one's self, the topic, the audience, and speech genres contingent on the CMC speech activity situated in a particular educational setting.

Date: Fri Nov 15 2002 6:02 pm  
Author: Pei  
Subject: Re: Faigley predicts Moje

Rubin,

I am curious -

When you say "the culture was not completely open, and therefore hidden" and '... the "insiders" have to be open to the "outsiders" inclusion ... ,' does it make any differences to you when the "insiders" are the ones with power

(such as certain disciplines you mentioned) or are the marginalized ones (such as the gangsters)?

If you sat in in a discussion carried on by Moje's teenagers and could not understand the language, would you feel the same way as the way you described – " ... exclude and distance me in some venues" ?

This particular utterance was first and foremost influenced by the broad classroom culture that was as heteroglossic as the members' resources were. The students constituting the core of the classroom community differed in their goals and directions they set out for the class as they did in their cultural and educational backgrounds they brought to the class. The students' different backgrounds initially set a stage for potential conflicts among voices in the class. As for the speaker of this particular utterance, Pei, she brought her own unique history as an individual to the class as described in the previous category of "Speaker." Meanwhile, in spite of differences in the students' backgrounds, interests, goals, and directions, all students were doing the same kind of activities as part of their requirements in this class. The goals and the teaching approaches proposed by the teacher and by the discipline as a whole began to interact with the expectations entertained by the students. Pei's utterance, woven in and out of such complex interrelationships, merged with some and recoiled from others. In part by engaging in many activities (reading texts, talking about them in oral and online discussions, doing self-reflective analysis of their oral and written language practices, and conducting psycholinguistic projects, etc.) embedded in the class, the students were beginning to develop a feel for what issues are addressed in the field of psycholinguistics, and to develop a language that allowed them to communicate with broader members of the field (including published authors, the teacher, and classmates). The students' responses to the values and practices embedded in the class were as diverse as the places from which they came. With her unique history that she brought to the electronic community, Pei in particular did not enjoy the CMC activity very much (as opposed to the teacher's high expectations as well as many other students' positive experience with it) because she felt increasingly alienated from other "young" students: "Quite often, I found myself disagree with viewpoints that were, interestingly, shared by other

participants. And often, I noticed that I could neither get the other participants to talk about it (by responding) nor to discuss it in the direction that I found worth pursuing. As a result, I found myself, more often than not, an out-group.”

Nevertheless, Pei’s decision “not to be in the norm” and “not to think inside the norm” was manifested in her many utterances in the CMC context. Pei came to the CMC speech activity to get a different perspective on things that had been discussed: “To me, in discussion, if you only try to say things you agree with people, then you’ll miss something important. There are always many different angles to look at things and I’m trying to do that here.” That particular message that was created with her unique sense of who she was and where she came from not only became an arena for negotiating her autobiographical self with her discursal self, but became an important nexus for an intense discussion of Group 3 on a topic thread of “Faigley predicts Moje.” Pei’s utterance was intertextually linked to other messages before and after hers. Pei chose Rubin’s message because she could see something Rubin was not able to see in Moje’s article and the students’ discussion on it: “To me, I see those as two different things, one is a group in power and the other one was totally oppressed, was put aside. To me, I wasn’t sure whether he could see that difference.” Pei realized the topic as “hero” by granting autonomy to the hero. Pei engaged the hero not as a static entity (e.g., object, body of knowledge) but as a dynamic, changing, living force with which she had a defined, yet shifting relationship. When she entered into a relationship with her addressed audience, Rubin, and the “big others” in the CMC group, Pei tried to determine her audience’s active responsive understanding: “I didn’t know much of his [Rubin’s] backgrounds, like where he is coming from. So, I challenged him by asking a question.” Pei chose a “questioning” genre to probe Rubin’s position as well as the others’ in the group. In this way, Pei opened a space for other students to raise their voices and invited further inquiry to the topic at hand.

As Bakhtin (1990) noted, Pei as the speaker was “the uniquely active form-giving energy that is manifested in the structures it generates – in the structures of the active vision of a hero as a definite whole, in the structure of his image, in the rhythm of



disclosing him, in the structure of intonating, and in the selection of meaning-bearing features” (p.8). She chose topics of discourse (realizing the topic as “hero”) and to determine the audience’s active responsive understanding (“addressivity”), and to select this speech genre (“questioning”) versus that one (direct criticism such as “That’s garbage”, as Pei reported she used in a similar face-to-face conversation with her co-worker). Although Pei did report that she did not really enjoy the asynchronous CMC, this activity provided an opportunity to see her everyday language use that she had taken for granted in a new light in the process of engaging in the course topics and discussing them with others: “Although I have not grasped or constructed in depth all the words presented in the class, I have been brought to the awareness of the functions language provided for my mental being” (Self-reflective Essay). The awareness, her ideological becoming, came from her being an active participant in the classroom activities.

## **CHAPTER 7**

### **DISCUSSION**

The purpose of this study was to explore the complexity of discursive practices of advanced students involved in the construction of texts in an asynchronous CMC speech activity, drawing upon a Bakhtinian understanding of utterance. Throughout the analysis presented in Chapters 4, 5, and 6, I focused on how CMC utterances were created, placing them in the context of ongoing evolving discursive and social practices embedded in the class. While much remains to be explored, my analysis of the participants' CMC texts suggests that *utterance* is a useful concept for understanding more fully the nature of language, specifically the nature of CMC discourse because it acknowledges heteroglossia, the real-life context of concrete utterances, and the complex negotiation processes among various values and beliefs involved in this particular discourse event. The concept of utterance was also useful for understanding better the ideological struggle that advanced students face as they enter into the classroom and into academic discourse. Through a Bakhtinian lens, I could more clearly see utterance as a struggle of forces, and within that struggle possibilities opened up for the individual student. The students were bound by context, but the context itself was full of heteroglossia. Within heteroglossia, there was at least room for a struggle to create discourse and invest it to some degree with one's own intentions. In this chapter, I will further my discussion of utterance with reference to the model I developed. Following this discussion, I will explain the limitations of the study and suggest implications for research and educational practice.

#### **Discussion of the Findings**

In Chapters 4, 5, and 6, I found indications of the limits and possibilities of concrete forms of utterances and concrete conditions affecting the life of utterances, their

interrelations, and their interactions in the CMC speech activity that was embedded in a particular graduate course. In discussing the findings of the study, I want to address the following five issues as overarching themes of the study: 1) CMC discourse and the sociocultural context; 2) discourse practices in CMC as processes of appropriation and reaccentuation; 3) utterance as a nexus of the speaker, the topic, addressivity, and speech genres; 4) ideological becoming and answerability as the nature of learning in CMC; and 5) L2 learners as co-participants in a community of practice.

### **CMC Discourse and the Sociocultural Context**

Arising from my analysis in Chapter 4 were complex interrelationships among the values and practices of the classroom community and the students' different experiences within the community, which in turn played an important role in shaping the nature of student participation in CMC discourse. Data from the present study suggest that a variety of factors related to course context and to the students' and the teacher's perceptions of CMC played a significant role in shaping online discourse. Among these many factors, four factors emerged from the data as especially important: 1) the unique heteroglossic histories the students brought to the class and their own perceptions of the members' resources for their learning in the class; 2) the nature of the course, especially how the teacher chose topics, assignments, and activities for the course, and how the purposes of the course were presented to and understood by the students; 3) the ways in which CMC was assigned and managed by the teacher and perceived by the students; and 4) the students' perceptions in general of CMC as a communication medium and their evolving sense of their roles as participants in course-related CMC discourse.

#### **The Members' Resources**

The students differed in their goals and in the directions they set out for the class as they did in the cultural and educational backgrounds they brought to the class. The

students' different backgrounds initially set a stage for potential conflicts among voices in the class as well as served as the resources the students could draw on from each other in reading, writing, and learning through "talk" both in-class and online. The students generally responded positively to the effect of the diversity of the students' backgrounds on their overall learning processes. As one of the participants commented, "Where one came from was not a drawback; on the contrary it was an enrichment of the class in terms of the provision of new perspectives and insights" (Ali, Self-reflective Essay). However, for certain few students, the diversity of the students' backgrounds was perceived as a negative influence on the quality of the interaction both in-class and online especially when the students could not see the relevance of other students' input to their disciplinary knowledge or current research interest.

### The Nature of the Course

In addition to the unique histories the students brought to the class, the nature of the course affected the students' participation of CMC discourse. The teacher of this study set her goal for the course as introducing the students to the discipline and to help them form a deep appreciation for their everyday language use. Her educational philosophy, a social constructivist view of learning, was manifested in her use of "text" as a focal classroom event for the students to express themselves and explore course concepts. In her effort to encourage the students to experience "text" as a phenomenon that results from the socially negotiated transaction between knowledge systems, she selected readings for the class taken from journals so that the students could read actual authors in their own words and negotiate meaning with the published authors of the field. In accordance with her instructional philosophy, the teacher chose classroom assignments (e.g., psycholinguistic project, take-home exams, and the analysis of oral comprehension and written discussion) that encouraged the students to analyze and apply course concepts to their daily lives or reflectively to their own learning in this class. Similarly, she encouraged her students to become authors and speakers themselves in both face-to-face

and CMC sessions throughout the semester. The teacher clearly articulated the purposes of the course and practiced what she believed from the very first class day. Particularly influential to the students was the way the teacher on the first day tried to promote the students' feeling of "we are in this together" on a journey of understanding course concepts and her emphasis of viewing other students as "fellow journeyers" by advising the students to take an open stance toward each other's contribution. In addition, the teacher's careful planning for the course that centered around a focal event of "text" connecting all the readings, assignments, and activities was acknowledged and appreciated by the students who said that their position toward the CMC discourse was influenced by their awareness that "everything is connected to everything else in this course" (Rita, Self-reflective Essay). Weaving CMC into the fabric of the course allowed the students to take a more active role in their participation in the CMC discourse.

### The Teacher's Role in CMC

The ways in which CMC was assigned and managed by the teacher and perceived by the students affected the students' experience with CMC discourse. The CMC activity was introduced as a partial replacement of face-to-face meetings, with the teacher's conviction that the alternative format of discussion will serve as an avenue in which the students' voices could be better heard. The fact that the class was relatively large with 23 students for a graduate seminar made it hard for the teacher to promote student talk in face-to-face meetings. In the oral class, the teacher often directed the discussion, and pointed it in the direction she felt worthy of exploration. However, the teacher rarely placed her argument or knowledge in monological terms; she very seldom ruled out exception and alternatives. Thus, even in her long lectures and her typically dominating role in the oral exchanges, the teacher of this class demonstrated not just a willingness, but a deep desire and commitment to hear and consider the students' ideas and opinions. The teacher's construction of such subjectivities was projected in the CMC discourse as well, yet in a more dynamic and constantly shifting manner. Construction of subjectivity,

particularly the centering rather than the de-centering of the subjectivity of the teacher, was at the center of the beginning of CMC conversation. This was also true of the tendency to engage in unifying “centripetal” statements about the construction of the students as “apprentices to be guided” and about the issues the teacher wanted the students to discuss at the conceptual and theoretical level. The initial exercise of the teacher’s centripetal force preceded the deconstruction of the subjects and the de-centering of the teacher in the CMC discourse. The students’ responses to the teacher’s role in the CMC context indicated that the teacher’s initial guiding role of providing prompts that were intended to pull the students together was a positive force. However, as the conversation evolved, significant in the CMC discourse was an absence of a privileging of the authority of a single expert as the students freely started threads of their own, responded to each other’s queries, and negotiated expertise with peers as well as with the teacher.

#### The Students’ Perceptions of CMC and Their Evolving Sense of Their Roles in CMC

Finally, the students’ perceptions in general of CMC as a communication medium and their evolving sense of their roles as participants in course-related CMC discourse contributed to their experience in this particular learning environment. One of the advantages that the students perceived with the use of CMC in their learning was the opportunity to be reflexive as a result of the time lag between their rereading of a message and posting a reply. Many participants reported that they rarely responded to messages straight away, often allowing several hours, even up to a day before posting a reply. Additionally some students suggested that they valued the opportunity to return to the conferences and review what had been said. Such opportunities would obviously not be available in face-to-face settings. The asynchronous CMC environment provided a different time dimension in the process of learning and enabled students to return to the CMC texts as often as they needed to.

Another advantage that the students perceived with the use of CMC in their learning was the opportunity for the students to share their diverse experiences so that everyone could gain an understanding of the applications of the course concepts they were learning to their own real-life learning and teaching situations. As such, the Blackboard provided many opportunities to engage with the content at deeper, more challenging levels. Thus, more advanced students in certain fields of study could model higher-level thinking for less experienced students. Students' inclinations to interact with their peers were fulfilled as they learned through CMC exchanges about other students who shared their interests or could contribute to their knowledge. The Blackboard provided a vital means for students to gain a sense of their peers as individuals, and thus might compensate for the absence of opportunities for face-to-face interaction. Students perceived that the asynchronous discussion provided a sense of contact and community with the class as a whole, and in particular, with other students who shared common backgrounds or professional disciplinary interests.

In addition, for some students, the Blackboard provided a relatively comfortable way to learn to take issue with what others said. Initially, the students may have hesitated to disagree with each other; however, gradually, with modeling from the teacher and a few students, more began to question, negotiate, and disagree with each other. As the students took up different issues and perspectives on a given topic, they perceived that the asynchronous CMC provided a means of sharing the transformations of perspectives they experienced as a result of the online dialogue. By having the opportunity to read a number of peers' messages, students developed their abilities to evaluate topics and content. This process enhanced their awareness of their own areas of expertise in relation to their peers. It also enhanced their self-confidence as they learned to scrutinize and question messages that others posted. As they analyzed those messages, students became aware of the content and qualities of written communication that contributed to powerful information and dialogue. When they tried to emulate these qualities in their own writing, they learned to develop their thoughts when they crafted them in writing, and received positive feedback from peers, augmenting their self-confidence. In all, the variety of

perspectives that the students presented to each other on the Blackboard provided them not only with new knowledge, but also with opportunities to reflect on their own ways of learning, thinking, and interacting with others.

We might organize these positive student perceptions of CMC around the following Bakhtinian themes: 1) CMC promotes a carnivalesque context; 2) in this carnivalesque environment, the students' freer contact among themselves is facilitated; 3) arising from the contact is the heteroglossic world of discourse and its eventual transformation within the heteroglossia. As one of the participants commented, the asynchronous discussion afforded an opportunity to set up the students' own structures in a carnivalesque learning environment: "Certainly the asynchronous online discussion that we have had created a new way for me to talk about the literature as opposed to fitting it in some sort of a bone structure that Nancy set up in the beginning by her teaching. I get to set up my own structure" (Hillary, Discourse-based Interview, November 21). The free, democratic setting in CMC in which all people were participating with their own structures blurred the line between a few performers and many spectators, characteristic of oral class, and promoted the participants' capacity to create and sustain an alternative sociocultural framework as they "took up new relations not only with the people around them, but also with their world" (Lensmire, 1994, p. 374). Most obviously, CMC's alternative framework provided quiet students who would not speak aloud in large face-to-face groups with a means to feel less threatened as they participated in a dialogue with peers. As one participant commented, the students found the asynchronous discussion to be a safer alternative to voicing their ideas: "Even if my comments are not as sophisticated or intelligent as other people, I don't have to worry about taking up other people's space because I know there is always space for me" (Yang, Discourse-based Interview, November 19). What the freer contact among people in CMC brought about was a merge of the heteroglossic world of discourses the participants of various backgrounds all invested with their own intentions. As one participant noted in his self-reflective essay, "much of the diversity of ideas from different cultures came through this computer-mediated mode of communication. Without this, the class would have lost



some of its richness and depth” (Rubin, Self-reflective Essay). Another student explicitly invoked Bakhtin’s construct of heteroglossia in describing her experience in CMC: “The classmates’ efforts to bring their related previous experiences and knowledge into the topic made possible to be an opportunity to experience heteroglossia which Bakhtin mentioned” (Seunghee, Self-reflective Essay). The carnivalesque CMC setting had the potential for transformation and renewal. The students’ transformative experience in this setting was manifested not only in their renewed understanding of the course concepts but also in their reflection on their own ways of learning, thinking, and interacting with others. As one of the participants said, “The experience encouraged me to be open to learning in a new environment. So, in addition to the terrific insights that I learned from my classmates during our cyber discussions, I also learned a great deal about expanding one’s definition of learning” (Rita, Self-reflective Essay).

The carnivalesque CMC environment, however, was not always perpetuated with positive forces. Despite overall positive responses to the asynchronous CMC, the students also identified some of the constraints the medium put on their participation and learning. Some students were not ready to enjoy its potential for transforming traditional, closed discourses. Because messages in CMC were conveyed in a written form, some students found themselves worrying about producing grammatically correct sentences and writing lengthy, well-crafted, “smart” messages as if they were writing an essay. In addition, some students reported that the lack of non-verbal clues and immediate responses in the asynchronous CMC led them to feel clueless as to whether they had correctly interpreted others’ words. In certain cases, the students’ privileged position in relation to other students in the class (because they thought either there was nothing much to learn from other students or what other students had to say would not be relevant to their research interests) led the students not to engage in the carnivalesque spirit of transforming “old” truths as much, which was also true in oral discussion. Despite such difficulties and resistances the students occasionally experienced, the CMC discourse nevertheless affected the students greatly on many levels, offering new opportunities for the linguistic, academic, emotional, social, and cultural development of the students as a result of

having a freer contact among the participants, which in turn enabled multiple voices within the individual and within the community to interact with each other.

### **CMC Discursive Practice: Appropriating and Reaccentuating**

As the carnivalesque CMC environment facilitated the freer contact among the participants and interaction among multiple voices within the individual and within the discourse community, much of what the CMC discourse showed was a complex process of appropriation and reaccentuation of others' words in the chain of communication. The data of the study indicated that the participants' different interests and motives led them to select for themselves what was significant in their reading and writing of the texts (in response to both assigned readings and CMC messages) and reaccent them with their own expressions and evaluative tones. In the process, another's utterance, whether it was from the published authors, the teacher, or the students, often became the subject of passionate communication in CMC, serving as an arena for interpretation, discussion, evaluation, rebuttal, support, and further development. What was evident in the analysis of the interaction among utterances in CMC was the transformation of perspectives the participants experienced as a result of the online dialogue that encouraged the students to work through the ever-present tension between others' words and their own.

Another fascinating finding that emerged from the intertextual analysis of CMC discourse was that Bakhtin's observation that one's utterance accurately quoted went through fundamental changes in the process of transmission to different dialogizing backgrounds seemed to be even more feasible in the multiloguing CMC context. The fact that the participants were operating within a series of parallel sets of discussions in the multilogue setting and that they were "licensed" to transgress other groups' territories despite the implicit rule of "sticking to their own group" allowed for a synthesis of meaning in often nontraditional ways. The pursuit of meaning in one group often made inroads into another group in which the meaning sought for in the original discussion forum went through changes and transformations in a merry abductive way.

The intertextual analysis of CMC discourse also revealed what Bakhtin called “great time,” infinite and unfinalized dialogue in which no meaning dies. As the CMC allowed members of the community to pull together arguments and examples, file them electronically, archive and examine them, and pull them for later reference, the students in CMC were able to renew the meaning they previously sought for in other related classroom activities such as the previous asynchronous discussion, the synchronous discussions, and their psycholinguistic projects. The data indicated that the students were acting like an archeologist in the CMC environment, recalling and invigorating topics, problems, and issues of their interest in a renewed form and making intertextual links across time and space.

Another important finding that emerged from the analysis of CMC discourse was that the teacher and the students alternately served as centripetal and centrifugal forces in weaving the electronic discourse. At the initial stage of the communication, the teacher often directed the students’ focus on a few specific points she wanted to make about the readings and re-directed the conversation to the theoretical level when the students directed the conversation to real-life contexts for too long. However, the students themselves often assumed the centripetal role by re-connecting other students’ concrete real-life examples with central course concepts. Moreover, the students freely initiated new topic threads and shifted the course of the conversation when the conversation began to become centralized and unified, thereby bringing disunification, decentralization, and chaos to the otherwise normative discourse. This finding indicated that both centripetal and centrifugal forces are dependent on one another and in fact both are needed in the flow of CMC discourse because meaning is constructed out of dialogue and difference.

One should note that there was an occasion of texts having not fully realized such intertextual potential. The process of appropriation and reaccentuation was greatly constrained when the speaker of an utterance did not consider the audience’s backgrounds and thus the given text was perceived distant from the readers, which in turn discouraged the readers’ efforts to make intertextual links with the text. The finding pointed to the importance of interlocking responsibilities both the writer and the reader

have to each other in maintaining the intertextual chain of communication in CMC, who should consider the audience's backgrounds and who should try to complement the writer's initial effort to bring up a new construct with her own understanding of the writer's intention.

By grounding the analysis of CMC texts and transcripts of discourse-based interviews, and students' self-reflective essays within naturalistic inquiry, I explored dialogical intertextual relations and interactions among CMC utterances in a chain of communication that were embedded in this particular classroom context. The findings from this intertextual analysis suggested that CMC discourse was constructed in an unending dialogic web of cross-connected utterances and responses, each piece of CMC utterance, depending on its unique occasion and context for its very existence, for its comprehensibility, and for its transformation. As one of the participants in the study commented, one of the greatest values of the asynchronous CMC was the boundless opportunities to contact with others' words full of heteroglossia and to create something new: "The responses from others were full of thought and made me more thoughtful. I feel that the asynchronous discussion made deeper meanings of the text, for me. It seemed like an interplay of languages, stemming from all of us, our entire prior knowledge interacting in our own texts created as a response to others' texts. Amazing!" (Hillary, Self-reflective essay).

### **Utterance as a Nexus of Speaker, Topic, Addressivity, and Speech Genres**

The analysis of the internal dialogism that pervaded each individual utterance in CMC suggested that utterances were created at the crossroads of the speaker, the topic as hero, addressivity, and speech genres, which were in turn inexplicable from the various individual, interpersonal, and institutional conditions within which the CMC activity was situated. From the analysis of utterances focusing on three different speakers, I demonstrated that the students approached CMC texts as they defined who they were, what they could do with the given topic, and ultimately what their textual representations

conveyed to themselves and their interlocutors. The data indicated that the students all went through the complex processes of negotiating their autobiographical self and discursal self in a struggle to construct a meaningful utterance in CMC. Truly remarkable was the way a new concept of human subjectivity came into fruition in the process of constructing an utterance in CMC, one that seemingly contradicted one's autobiographical self but nevertheless true to oneself, to one's own orientation, still groping for a discourse of one's own.

In light of the Bakhtinian concept of the topic as hero and its generative influence on a life of utterance, I demonstrated that as the students engaged a topic as hero, they faced the complexity and contradiction of voices within any given topic and the daunting task of making up their minds about their own participative orientations toward and relationships with the topic and others' utterances about that topic. Each speaker's struggle to achieve a determinate, yet continuously shifting, dynamic image of the hero was a struggle with herself, and within that struggle ideological becoming opened up for the individual student. The CMC context allowed for a critical dimension for the individual speaker's ideological becoming to spread quickly over the entire group. The data showed that the students who had not initially recognized the relevance of the given topic to their life experiences or disciplinary interests were affected by the discourses of other students who actively engaged in the topic. Particularly remarkable was a finding that one student's predetermined orientation toward the discourse of published authors as "not challengeable" began to become deconstructed as she was inspired by another student's utterance in CMC that did challenge the published authors. This led the student to embark on her own search for a better image of the topic as hero in her own CMC utterance.

Along with the speaker and the topic with hero, addressivity, the quality of turning to someone was found to become a constitutive feature of the utterance created via CMC. I demonstrated that the (direct) addressee's convictions, views, prejudices, and sympathies and antipathies and the speaker's relative position were reflected in a special way in the students' utterances in CMC. When the students perceived their addressed

audience as friends/allies, they could easily embody the addressed audience's responses, and thus their resulting utterances showed a candor of intimate speech, expressed in a merging of conceptual horizons between the speaker and the listener. On the other hand, when the students perceived their addressed audience as strangers, their struggle to get a reading on the addressee's alien conceptual system and their decision to be more careful about the choice of language devices was projected in their utterances. Whether the students perceived their addressed audience as close or distant, their utterances in CMC could not escape another pervasive force, the profound influence of the multiple voices of "the others" in the group. The CMC context in which the students wrote their messages for the entire group (including the teacher) to share in a "public" space forced the students to deal with the audience heteroglossia, which introduced unique internal dramatism into their utterances.

Finally, a vast range of speech genres entered into the internal dialogism of utterances in CMC. I demonstrated that different motivations generated different ways of using genres and communicating through them. When the students were faced with a specific communicative situation, viewed in terms of purpose, audience, and medium, they responded in ways consistent with their personal repertoire of genres learned through experience, at the same time utilizing genre features that were being created in a new medium of CMC. The students brought various genres into the asynchronous CMC discussion such as greeting, narrating, promising, declaring, defining, abstracting, interpreting, evaluating, eliciting, and testing. Notably, these genres, each with its own purpose, were often fused together in a single utterance. In the discussion's procession, secondary genres developed from the primary genres, as Bakhtin noted. The students often combined primary genres with secondary when they posted long utterances that brought declarative statements in conjunction with questions. In addition, students used the descriptive genres to support an interpretive statement, indicating an increase in the complexity of speech genres. Particularly interesting was the finding that the speech genres generally moved from cooperative to competitive ones. The shift to the competitive genres of interpretation and argumentation occurred after the cooperative

genres had run their course in an utterance. Having established a “community” at the beginning of a turn, the students were able to question and challenge one another, exploring an open space for further development of knowledge. Even in the most heated of argument, the exploration process was often manifested through the use of hedged evidential phrases such as “I think” and “It seems to me” rather than forcefully-worded assertions.

### **Ideological Becoming and Answerability: The Nature of Learning in CMC**

The findings of the study indicated that linguistic, cognitive, affective, social, and cultural development, what I would call “learning,” did occur in the CMC context, especially for those students who were committed to the process of dialogic struggle and group adaptation in the process of interpreting and producing utterances. The model I developed in my study has much to offer in analyzing students’ development not just as a process by which the individual learns from the social environment, but as a unique process of individual and group change that occurs through the use of discourse. The importance of Bakhtin in my study of CMC discourse, I would argue, was not only that he recognized that heteroglossia always exists within discourse, but that he helped us see more precisely the ideological struggle the students faced in this CMC discourse event. “Our ideological development,” Bakhtin (1981) pointed out, “is ... an intense struggle within us for hegemony among various available verbal and ideological points of view, approaches, directions and values” (p. 346). For Bakhtin, what is at stake when writers write or speakers speak is nothing less than their ideological development, an individual consciousness that is always thoroughly saturated with others’ words and ideologies but that does not simply acquiesce to some centralizing force. Such an ideological struggle was precisely what the participants in my study faced in the asynchronous CMC. By consciously and actively making choices among competing discourses, whether they be those of published authors, the teacher, and other students, the participants worked toward self-development as well as group change in the CMC context. The students

actively resisted power and made choices in defining themselves in relation to others, seeking meaning in the ideologically saturated world, and deciding what exists, what is possible, and what is of value. They did not simply appropriate and be appropriated by any centralizing force in CMC. Rather, the process of engaged learning in CMC was made possible as the students encountered with a voice or a polyphony of alien voices, combined it with their inner voices, reaccented it with their intentions and evaluative tones, and created a new reality out of which she now spoke and acted. This description suggests that the students were not just a passive receiver in CMC. They could identify which words they took into the context of utterance in its ongoing construction in response to or in anticipation of other utterances. Furthermore, they could resist or transform the authoritative words they often encountered in published articles by influencing and being influenced by their peers' discourse on them. As such, the multiple voices and perspectives that the students presented to each other in CMC entered into the struggle for influence within an individual's consciousness, providing the students with unlimited opportunities not only to engage with the content at deeper, challenging levels but also to reflect on their own ways of learning, thinking, and interacting with others. All this created fertile soil for learning in CMC. One might ask at this point, "Would this be possible in any CMC context?" Maybe not. One should note that such ideological becoming the participants experienced in this study was made possible because both the students and the teacher approached the asynchronous CMC with a sense of what Bakhtin called "answerability."

Bakhtin (1990) stated that because the self attains knowledge and identity through dialogic relationship, it is called upon to create meaning and participate in the event of utterance with a sense of answerability. "I have to answer with my own life for what I have experienced and understood in art [utterances], so that everything I have experienced and understood would not remain ineffectual in my life" (p.1). The self realizes, "That which can be done by me can never be done by anyone else. The uniqueness or singularity of present-on-hand Being is compellingly obligatory" (p. 40). The self, as a center of answerability in its own unique situation, faces a value-laden



opportunity to participate concretely in the Being-event in a way no other can. Bakhtin thus moved from epistemology to a foundation for personal ethics and an implicit call for responsible involvement within the dialogic relationship. The self has a choice to be concretely answerable in this particular moment – to exercise agency or to refuse it. Through our moment-by-moment answers, we begin to create a text, to author our lives. However, as Bakhtin always emphasized throughout his works, we are always contingent. We work according to the image of ourselves that we receive in dialogue because we see ourselves only through the eyes of others. Authoring of self then must not be misunderstood as the act of a radically free individual. We are still within the bounds of a socially constructed self. Nevertheless, it is the call to be answerable and ethical within that concretely unique and always dialogic situation.

The concept of answerability was particularly applicable to the CMC context I observed in the study because it spoke well to a variety of interlocking responsibilities: on the one hand, from the teacher to the students, to the processes of teaching, and to the voices embedded in texts, and on the other hand, from the students to the purposes of the class, to the teacher, to each other, and to the texts they co-authored with other voices. Because of the dialogic nature of responsibility, one participant had the power to evoke committed responses from the others. In this study, the teacher, particularly conscientious and committed to students' learning, often elicited a high level of engagement from students who entered the class with little motivation. Likewise, the teacher and other classmates were inspired by a group of highly answerable students. The students and the teacher, through engagement with utterances with a sense of answerability, came to see the value of negotiating different values in CMC and at the same time found greater space for their own role in co-authoring the texts with other voices.

## **L2 Learners as Co-participants of a Graduate Course**

This study attempted to yield a better understanding of the discourse practice of advanced students in a graduate seminar through their engagement in the asynchronous

CMC. Drawing mainly on Bakhtinian constructs, I explored the larger sociocultural context of learning, the local cultures and expectations of the focal activity of CMC and the discourse characteristics of the activity, and the CMC utterance as a locus for the speaker, the topic, addressivity, and speech genres and as resource for students' ideological becoming. One of the major issues I wanted to address in this study was the issue of L2 learners, whether learning to read and write in a discipline involves the same process for L2 students as it does for American students. By investigating nonnative speakers as members of the academic community with native speakers and by focusing on their participation in this particular CMC activity embedded in the course, I found that many students, NSs and NNSs, considered themselves as relative novices in the academic community and often felt insecure about their knowledge, skills, and performances. Although NNSs occasionally faced many challenges and felt insecure in their attempts to become competent members of the academic discourse community, so did many NSs. As one NS put it, students sometimes experienced difficulties in learning the academic discourse that this particular discipline shared and negotiated: "Part of that has been just learning a different language, the way words are used and the concepts that go with them. If you don't speak in that particular language, you are an outsider. You are not really a part of the field" (Rubin, Discourse-based interview, November 21). Surprisingly, it was the NSs who most frequently reported their struggle in adding their voices to the academic conversation in the CMC context, either because they felt they lacked the kind of expertise required or because they were worried about constructing "grammatically correct" sentences.

At the same time, however, many students (both NSs and NNSs) were experienced teachers and researchers with a fair amount of expertise in their specialized fields of study and education, which often provided them with a sense of professional confidence and authority in talking in CMC. Thus, in participating in the CMC activity, the students tapped into each other's expertise, which continuously shifted as topics for the discussion in CMC changed and drew on the diverse linguistic and cultural resources that they brought to the class. What was particularly striking was the fact that L2 learners

felt empowered by actively participating in the CMC activity. As one NNS put it, the asynchronous CMC allowed them to “show how we read and write with authority” when they were not able to do so in oral class “partly because of language barrier that prevents us from elaborating on our ideas, partly because people are more self-conscious when it comes to being different from other people” (Yang, Discourse-based Interview, November 19). In fact, as documented in the present study, many NNSs added their voices to the academic conversation in CMC not only as novices in the discourse community but also as experienced professionals, or cultural agents, or as participants with unique perspectives and specializations, and thus contributed multiple voices to the academic community of the graduate seminar. Recall how Ping, a Taiwanese woman, in her effort to challenge and further expand the perspectives of the “young” students in the class, interjected her critical comments, contributing to the transformation of perspectives. Recall how Minho, a Korean male, in his desire to let other American students know where he came from and how he felt about course concepts, initiated several topic threads that recreated the image of course concepts from an EFL teacher’s perspective. Recall how Ming, a Taiwanese woman, who initially felt vulnerable in her expertise in this particular area of study, emerged as a leader of her group in CMC. Further recall how Seunghee, a Korean woman, who identified herself as a “slow, struggling reader” and “inexperienced” graduate student, found a space for her voice in CMC, turning her cultural background into resources with which to interact with others and project some desired future.

The findings in all point to a need to reexamine the often taken-for-granted dichotomy between NSs and NNSs, based on which L2 researchers and educators often assume that the ultimate goal for NNSs is to gain nativelike proficiency in their L2 (for recent discussions on this topic, see Braine, 1999; Matsuda et. al, 2003; Morita, 2000; Spack, 1998; Zamel, 1997). However, this study, which included both NNSs and NSs as participants, suggests a danger in such assumptions, because in spite of their language difficulties many NNSs were as successful as NSs in participating in the CMC activity. The NNSs were able to use a range of resources and their utterances were often perceived

as smart, sophisticated, and brilliant by their NS peers and teacher. Rather than being positioned as “marginalized” individuals, the NNSs stood “side-by-side” with American students in co-constructing CMC texts in this graduate course. Thus, instructors in graduate courses need to be careful about making assumptions about the abilities, performance, and difficulties of NS and NNS students. It may also be useful to reexamine NNSs’ assumption that a speech activity such as asynchronous CMC is much easier for NSs to perform simply because they are NSs. What NNSs in this study did not always realize was the fact that many NSs occasionally felt just as nervous or insecure as they did.

### **Limitations of the Study**

Having discussed some of the important findings of my study, I must now outline the ways in which the data may have been adversely affected by limitations in the research design. This section identifies these limitations. One of the key limitations of the study relates to the nature of naturalistic qualitative inquiry. In this type of analysis, one often establishes an overarching model that inevitably tends to highlight some data and devalue other data. This may, in turn, lead to misrepresentation of some aspects of the data. Like other qualitative researchers, I faced the difficult task of reducing what I saw in the data into a story to be conveyed to others. As with all stories, the story I presented in this report could be told from a variety of perspectives that might overemphasize or, conversely, undervalue different aspects of the data. In this study, I encountered substantial difficulty in my effort to package what I was seeing in the data into clearly marked findings. In interpreting and reporting the results of the study, I often felt as if I had revealed only a portion of the story that could be told. That is why it is important to remind the reader that there could be “other” realities that I might have missed and that some of the realities I reported here might have been misrepresented even though I worked hard to enhance credibility by triangulating the findings from various data sources. At the same time, as Bakhtin noted in his later essay, *Toward a Methodology for*

*the Human Sciences* (1986), interpretation is “the discovery of a path to seeing (contemplating) and supplementing through creative thinking” (p.159). For me, understanding entire utterances and dialogic relations among them in CMC was always of a dialogic nature, me as a researcher participating in the dialogue, although on a special level. Therefore, the meaning I presented in the study “cannot be peaceful and cozy (one cannot curl up comfortably and die within it)” (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 160).

Another limitation relates to the research particulars. While I made every effort to ensure the transferability of the study (Guba & Lincoln, 1985), it is important to note several possible limitations in the research design. This study was conducted in a particular graduate course at a major research university in the United States. The nature of the course in which “language” and “discourse” was an important theme and the students were explicitly asked to reflect on their learning in the CMC environment as part of the course assignments, and the composition of the student body (e.g., almost half of the students were international students) should be considered in the transfer of any interpretation from this study. Moreover, although the findings of the study may appear to cast the students’ experiences in CMC in a somewhat positive light, it cannot be emphasized too strongly that the students in general were highly motivated students who came to the class with interests in language and discourse. As one participant commented, “I’m in classrooms all the times where talk is very important and discourse is really important” (Hillary, Discourse-based Interview, November 21). Because I have dealt with a single classroom, many specific results cannot be generalized to other cases. The descriptive nature of just one rather unique class experience with the asynchronous CMC prevents me from generalizing these results to other educational settings or other mediums of computer communications. The study here involved only a small group of graduate level students; therefore, it does not provide enough information to predict how other teachers would use conferencing systems or other on-line communications or how other groups of students would react to it. Despite the special nature of this course, however, I believe that the issues raised in this study concerning the construction of academic knowledge and multiple identities through CMC and the reflexive practices that

can result from access to electronic learning environments, are appropriate in other contexts as we move further along the road of virtual learning in different settings within higher education. The findings are even more appropriate in any classroom settings in which “discourse” is one of the central themes for the course as in fields such as general education, linguistics, communications, language and literacy, and foreign language education.

Another limitation of the study is that the students might have purposely withheld information or acted unnaturally because they knew they were being audio-taped in interviews. Knowing that their comments in interviews might be published in the report of the findings of the study, for example, they might have chosen to say what they thought the teacher or I expected them to say. What was striking, however, was the candor they showed in their discourse-based interviews in revealing their moment-by-moment struggles and decision-making processes in their attempts to make their utterances more meaningful to themselves as well as to others. I was once again relieved to read the students’ self-reflective essay on written conversation, which was submitted to the teacher as part of their course requirements at the end of the semester. The same candor was evident in those essays. The value of the study would have been diminished if I were to present the data in a way that simply painted a “pretty picture.” That I was a member of the same program as seven of the participants also may have influenced the findings of the study and how I reported them. The students were my friends as well as my classmates. Hence, a subconscious bias based on pre-study personal impressions may have affected my reporting of the data. In addition, although the emic knowledge accrued through my graduate years of taking the courses with the teacher and knowing the classroom culture added strength to the study, it is possible that my own experiences colored my interpretation of what I saw. The picture I have provided in this study may be very different from what someone else might see. I attempted to address this concern by sharing my interpretations with knowledgeable people who reviewed and assisted in clarifying my interpretations.

## **Implications of the Study**

In this section I suggest some implications of this study for the research and teaching in the following three areas: literacy studies, L2 academic writing (English for Academic Purposes), and CMC studies.

### **Implications for Literacy Studies**

I have responded to literacy researchers' plea to create a more satisfactory convergence between the study of texts and the study of practices. As Barton (1994) noted, studying practices involves understanding how literacy is embedded in people's lives and the different ways in which they go about similar tasks involving literacy. It has been my goal to contribute, even if only in a small way, to this convergence by focusing on the participants' feelings and intentions behind the texts, and by grounding textual analysis within ethnographic approaches to the study of classroom culture. It is important to bring all the relations and interactions into the picture in relation to other elements in a social view of writing. Although considerable attention has been paid to the context, task, goals and purposes, and processes in many previous literacy studies, researchers have not fully explored the interrelationships among them. By showing exactly how students claimed academic discourse community membership through their discourse choices in their CMC utterances, I have, I believe, enriched the concept of "academic discourse community." My study also revealed the sorts of tensions, discontinuities, and contradictions that have been said to characterize discourse communities, clothing with detailed personal, concrete examples the generalizations made by Harris (1989, 1997), Bizzell (1982, 1992) and Swales (1990).

Literacy researchers (Ivanic, 1998; Lemke, 1998; Porter, 1986; Prior, 1998) referring to such concepts as intertextuality and appropriation are, I think, making fundamentally the same claim as I am: that writers construct utterances from socially available discoursal resources that have particular subject positions inscribed in them.

The particular contribution of my research would be to provide specific details and insights from the participants themselves to substantiate this claim. In so doing, I hope this study will increase a better understanding of the complexity of these processes. The idea of the discursual construction of utterance is fundamental to critical approaches to academic discourse. Critical theorists such as Fairclough (1989, 1992, 1995) have drawn attention to the qualities that non-traditional entrants to higher education bring to the academic community, and to the challenges they pose to its whole edifice of values and practices. I think this position is enhanced by investigating CMC as an alternative discourse practice and viewing CMC utterances as a site of struggle in which students are negotiating different values. Many of the insights resulting from my study of advanced students engaged in the CMC activity can, I believe, be applied to the analysis of texts in discursive practice in social practice in other types of written and spoken language use.

### **Implications for English for Academic Purposes**

I have already discussed the issue of L2 learners as co-participants of a community of practice, challenging the monologic dichotomy between NSs and NNSs solely based on language proficiency. Here, I want to discuss how L2 writing researchers and teachers (in the field of English for Academic Purposes) might use the findings of the present study to enhance the academic lives of L2 learners in teaching academic writing.

First, if academic discourse and academic environments are complex, constructed, and unfolding events and not closed systems susceptible to rule-oriented description, as documented in the analysis of one particular emerging discourse practice (the asynchronous CMC) embedded in the academic discourse community, then we cannot simply specify and teach academic writing tasks. Perhaps it is time for researchers and practitioners to direct less attention to static conceptualizations of communicative competence that lead us into well-structured knowledge representations and to pay more attention to considering how we can facilitate students' development of the communicative flexibility needed to achieve communication in dynamic, situated



interaction. The carefully structured discussions of the typical academic writing tasks can be complemented with animated, engaged, and at times feverishly pitched discussions in which students use their discursive talents to make voices heard and bring about palpable changes in their communities.

Second, when academic writing pedagogy is viewed through the lens of discourse practice, one could find many valuable practices already in place in this course, practices that employed authentic materials, language, tasks, audience; that created opportunities for experiential learning (e.g., learning projects); that allowed for student-initiated expression and dialogue (e.g., computer conferences); and that emphasized self-directed inquiry (e.g., unit assignments that aim at “heuristic discovery” and self-reflective essays). Writing teachers might adopt and adapt such practices to better serve L2 learners’ academic needs as they prepared the students for the ever-changing disciplinary cultures.

Finally, if each utterance is a site of struggle, as documented in the study, writing teachers should try to read L2 students’ texts to see what is there rather than what is not, resisting generalizations about literacy and intelligence that are made on the basis of judgments about standards of correctness and forms, and suspending their judgments about the alternative rhetorical approaches that the students might adopt. This kind of open stance on the part of the teachers might be necessary if they wish to assist L2 students not only in learning the academic conventions of writing but also in becoming agents who are capable of actively participating in ideological struggle and shaping the very discourse into which they are asking the students to enter.

### **Implications for CMC Research**

This study attempted to take a comprehensive view of the discourse in CMC environments. I am not aware of other full qualitative studies of the asynchronous CMC discourse that have drawn on Bakhtinian concepts, rich and evocative descriptions of discourse acquisition and use in context. With the aid of Bakhtinian theoretical

constructs, I have responded to CMC researchers' call for studying CMC discourse in context, the complex interaction of contextual factors embedded in a particular sociocultural context, "look[ing] beyond the texts of interaction to the broader contextual dynamics that shape and are shaped by those texts" (Kern & Warschauer, 2000; Yagelski & Grabill, 1998; Murray, 2000). By providing the thick description of the contexts of CMC discourse, I hope I have made a step further in that direction. Among a host of methodological tools I employed to probe the meaning of an utterance in CMC, CMC researchers would be well advised to use a discourse-based interview. This tool can complement textual analysis (content analysis) in an important way by using its results to probe "the thinking behind the text" in collaborative work within learning communities in networked environments. Further investigators employing similar methods might replicate the study in other academic programs. This might enable the investigator to address the following question left unanswered by this study: Would the results of this study have been different where it carried out in another department? What if, for example, one were to conduct such a study in a more rigidly defined course?

The discursual construction of utterance in CMC is a relatively new research focus, providing a challenging, multidisciplinary project for the future. There are still many theoretical questions about the social construction of utterances in CMC and the nature of learning in the online environment that need to be pursued. This was an exploratory study, showing the richness and complexity of what is involved in the construction of utterances in CMC, but it paid only cursory attention to some issues. I believe that each subcategory (e.g., the speaker, the topic, addressivity, speech genres) that entered into the broad model of an utterance, for example, deserves more sophisticated and systematic analysis. A particularly valuable complement to this study would be further research on how the same person constitutes utterances differently in different activities (e.g., academic writing tasks, synchronous CMC, asynchronous CMC, and oral activities) embedded in a particular sociocultural context, both through writing and through other semiotic means. This would be particularly interesting because it would put multiple literacies into perspective: A person's literacy practice is bound to

prove much more diverse on such evidence, and it would be possible to trace interplay between different aspects of an individual's academic life. This seems to me to be an important dimension that is missing from my research: it was something I was aware of, but did not collect sufficient evidence of and did not have space to address. In short, there are many avenues for future study within the broad field of the social construction of texts in CMC.

### **Conclusion: Toward a Critical Pedagogy**

The results of this study demonstrate that the discursive practice in CMC is a complex, highly personal/social process that involves more than simply learning about the discourse rules and rhetorical genres of one's field. As opposed to formal classroom instruction, in which learning might take place in an organized and somewhat predictable manner, the asynchronous CMC in which the students operated was a dynamic and rich environment. Engagement in this environment hinged on the participants' ability to situate themselves in positions where they could gain access to the resources of the community. This would place them on trajectories that would lead to further participation in the life of community. The findings of the study demonstrated that in the asynchronous CMC, learners themselves were able to engage directly with the discourse with a sense of answerability and discover for themselves what use it may have in helping them to understand not only course concepts but also their life experiences. In interpreting and producing utterances in CMC, the students pursued their own ideological becoming and worked against the authority of the discourses of the published authors and against the preformulations of their experiences

Taking a step further, teachers may further enrich the learning experiences of such already highly committed students by providing the students with tools for critically evaluating the social context in which they are learning, for identifying ways in which it restricts their opportunities and the opportunities for others, and ultimately for envisaging more inclusive alternatives, and fighting for them. Such a pedagogy would be founded on

a view of learners as intellectuals, researchers and teachers as active participants in social struggles, searching for understandings that will be of direct use to the students, which will open up new fields of vision and new perspectives, and provide a basis for their own transformative action. Blair (1996) showed how microethnography can be an effective tool for analyzing the possibilities and constraints of electronic discourse by overviewing two electronic mail ethnography projects. He suggested that such approaches can help students better understand electronic rhetoric as well as electronic ideology (the power relationships and cultural values that determine what is said and who says it). By raising learners' critical awareness of the nature of discourse in CMC, teachers can bring students' attention to the CMC discourse processes so that they can critically reflect on their own learning processes and interactional patterns. As such, teachers may begin to encourage among students a deeper appreciation for the forms of their discourses and their engagement with others' discourses in CMC. The endeavor should be to encourage in students a flexible attitude to a variety of discourses on CMC and help students critically reflect on the social relations they are constructing through CMC texts.

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